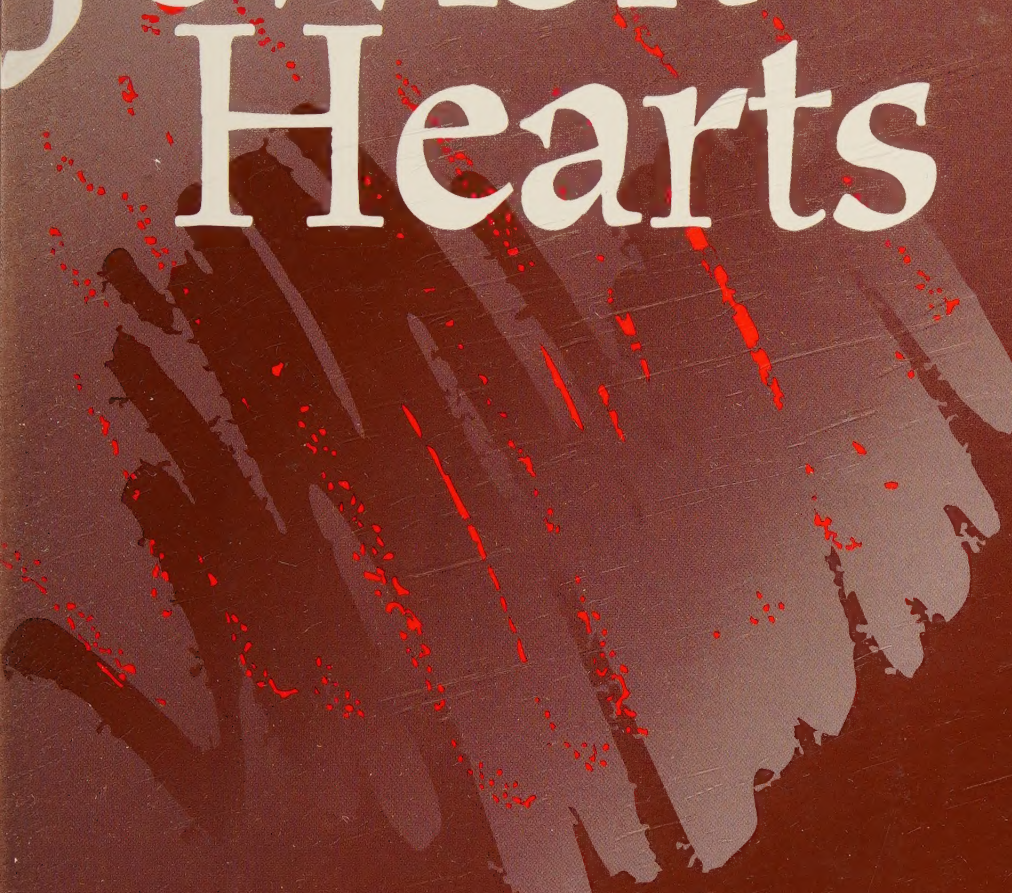
Jewish Hearts



A STUDY OF DYNAMIC ETHNICITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION

BETTY N. HOFFMAN

F 104 .H3 H64 2001
Hoffman, Betty N.
Jewish hearts

DATE | ISSUED TO

F 104 .H3 H64 2001
Hoffman, Betty N.
Jewish hearts

Latourette Library
William Carey Int'l University
1539 E. Howard, Pasadena, CA 91104
(626) 398-2155 • library@wciu.edu

DEMCO

JEWISH HEARTS

DATE DUE

Demco, Inc. 38-293

SUNY Series in Oral and Public History
Michael Frisch, editor

104
·H3
H64
200

JEWISH HEARTS

A Study of Dynamic Ethnicity in the United States and the Soviet Union

Betty N. Hoffman

State University of New York Press

Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany

© 2001 State University of New York

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission. No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means including electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission in writing of the publisher.

For information, address State University of New York Press
90 State Street, Suite 700, Albany, New York 12207

Production by Dana Foote
Marketing by Dana E. Yanulavich

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hoffman, Betty N.
Jewish hearts : a study of dynamic ethnicity in the United States and the Soviet Union / Betty N. Hoffman.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 0-7914-4945-9 (alk. paper)—ISBN 0-7914-4946-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Jews—Connecticut—Hartford—History—20th century.
2. Jews—Connecticut—Hartford—Identity. 3. Jews, Soviet—Connecticut—Hartford.
4. Hartford (Conn.)—Ethnic relations. 5. Immigrants—Connecticut—Hartford—History—20th century. 6. Jews—Soviet Union—History. 7. Jews—Soviet Union—Identity. 8. Soviet Union—Ethnic relations. 9. Jews—Migrations. I. Title.

F104.H3 H64 2001
964.6'3004924—dc21

00-067120

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Wm. Carey Int'l University

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations ix

Acknowledgments xi

Introduction xiii
  Definitions and Demographics xv
  Russian Jews xvi
  Soviet Jews xvi
  American Jews xvii
  Sources of Information xviii
  "The Literature" xxi
  Theoretical Analysis in a Complex World xxii

Part I
THE TRANSFORMATION OF JEWISH LIFE IN TWO CONTEXTS, 1881–1970

1. The Old Country 3
  Ethnicity and Anti-Semitism: Critical Boundaries 3
  Assassination 5
  Politics and Power 6
  Religion and Ideology: The Basis for Social Cohesion 8
  Education 10
  Economic Production under Anti-Semitic Pressure 12
  War, Chaos, and Change 13
  Revolution 15

2. The Search for a Niche in the Soviet World 19
  New Incentives, New Constraints, and Anti-Semitism 19
  The Consolidation of Communist Power 20
  The Decimation of Religious Practice: Silence as a Strategy 24
  Education for the New Economy 25
  The Great Patriotic War: The Decimation of the Jews 27
  Discrimination at Home, Support for Israel Abroad 31
  Stalin's Final Terror 35

The Post-Stalin Era 37
The Six Day War 39
Beyond Silence: Moving toward a Positive Jewish Ethnicity 40

3. *Die Goldene Medine:* The Golden Land 43
    Hartford: The Challenge of the New World 43
    Yiddishkeit in Hartford: The Immigrant Neighborhood 45
    Adapting to the Hartford Political System 47
    Religious Practice: The Defining Ethnic Marker 52
    Kinship and Social Structure 56
    Education and Americanization: New Secular Trends 59
    Searching for Economic Security 63
    The Beginning of Immigration Restriction 65

4. The Consolidation of the Hartford Community 67
    The Area of Second Settlement 67
    The Depression and Anti-Semitism: Limiting the Refugees 68
    World War II and the Aftermath 72
    Transitions in the Postwar Period 73
    The Six Day War: The American Jewish Response 77
    "Save Soviet Jewry" 77

Part II
EGYPT AND THE EXODUS, 1990–1984

5. Egypt 85
    Shifting Identities 85
    Enduring Daily Life in the U.S.S.R. 87
    The Politicization of Soviet Jewry 89

6. Jewish Identity 99
    Ethnic Ambivalence 99
    Remnants of Behavior 101
    Accepting Ethnic Identity and Shifting to Action 110

7. Ethnicity: In the Community, at School, and at Work 115
    Remnants of Jewish Community 115
    Shrinking Educational Opportunities for the Children 118
    The Threat of Economic Limitations for the Children 122

8. The Exodus 127
    Breaking Old Patterns 127

Gathering Courage and Information 128
Emigration: Moving through the Process 131
A Soviet Jewish Analysis of Refusal 141
Wandering in the Wilderness: The Transition 143

Part III
THE PROMISED LAND, 1975–1984

9. Selecting New Strategies for the New World 151
Hartford: The New Context 151
Initial Preoccupations: Interpreting the Alternatives 155
The Volunteers: A Personal Invitation to Jewish Community 162

10. Incorporating New Variables 171
Education: Making Critical Choices for the Children 171
Economic Production: Encountering the Capitalist System 178
Alternatives in Economic Production 184

11. Involvement with Community Life 191
Kinship and Personal Contacts 191
Social Structure and Community 199
"American Politics Is One of the Best Entertainments" 202

12. Religion and Identity in the Promised Land 209
Initial Expectations 209
Reported Jewish Behaviors 214
Expressions of Jewish Identity 218
The Affiliated 219
The Unaffiliated with "Jewish Hearts" 223
Rejecting Ascription 227
"There is Judaism in Us So Deep Inside That, When It Matters, It Comes Out; but When It Doesn't, It's Buried" 230

Conclusion 233
Who Am I? 235
Where Do I Fit into This New World? 237
What Does It Mean to Be a Jew Now? 239

Notes 243

Selected Bibliography 263

Index 277

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/jewishheartsstud0000hoff_s8s6

ILLUSTRATIONS

All photographs are part of the permanent collection of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford.

1. Helping the Tsukanov family move into their new West Hartford apartment, 1990 xii
2. The Greydinger brothers on the Eighth of March Collective Farm, 1931 21
3. An illegal Passover seder in the Ukraine, 1950 34
4. The Immigrant East Side, 1914. Elihu Greer's Sons New Map of Hartford from the 1914 City Directory, courtesy of the Connecticut Historical Society of Hartford, Connecticut 42
5. G. Fox and Company before 1917 44
6. The Hershberg family on the East Side, circa 1910 48
7. Front Street Pushcarts, circa 1920 49
8. The Sherry family, June 1914 57
9. "Let My People Go," circa 1977 78
10. The Barzachs, one of the first New American families to settle in Hartford, 1975 152
11. Volunteers from the National Council of Jewish Women with the Donskoys, 1977 163
12. New Americans welcome more recent arrivals, circa 1980 192

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In a project of this sort where so many people were generous with their time and memories, I can only begin to express how much I appreciate their help. Without my informants, my students at the Beth Israel English Program for Soviet Jews, and my friends in the Soviet Jewish community, I would never have understood the nuances of the refugee experience. I am grateful to the professionals from the various agencies and to the volunteers, who eased the path of the Soviet Jews as they became New Americans, for their willingness to share their experiences in the refugee resettlement effort. I would also like to thank Jewish Historical Society members, Emma Cohen and Morris Handler, who grew up in Hartford early in the twentieth century. They answered my many questions about life in the immigrant community and filled in the gaps in the archival oral histories.

I appreciate the time and effort put in by Theodore Wohlsen formerly of the Connecticut State Library, Michelle Palmer formerly of the University of Connecticut Center for Oral History, and Marsha Lotstein, Executive Director of the Jewish Historical Society who searched their archives for appropriate interviews for me. I would like to give special thanks to Marsha Lotstein for her introductions to helpful community members, for the photographs she provided for this book, for her critical reading of the manuscript, and for her general support over the years.

Bruce Stave, Professor of History at the University of Connecticut and the Director of the Oral History Center; Jack Lucas, Professor Emeritus in Anthropology at Central Connecticut State University; Philip Wiener, former Director of the Jewish Family Service; and Vida Barron, former Director of the Resettlement Office of the Jewish Family Service read and commented upon various drafts of *Jewish Hearts.* Former academics from the Soviet Union now working in Hartford in other capacities, Mara Brondspits and Boris Bolshin critiqued my manuscript from an insider's New American perspective. Their comments were invaluable.

The single greatest contributor to my successful completion of *Jewish Hearts* was Robert L. Bee, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Connecticut and Chairman of my Dissertation Committee. His demands for excellence in both research and writing encouraged me to strive to meet his high standards.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, my daughters—Rina, Elana, Abby, and Liat—and my parents—Mona and Maurice Newburger—who encouraged me from the first day to the last. My husband Herb was unique in his support. Without him I never would have had the courage to tackle and complete this project.

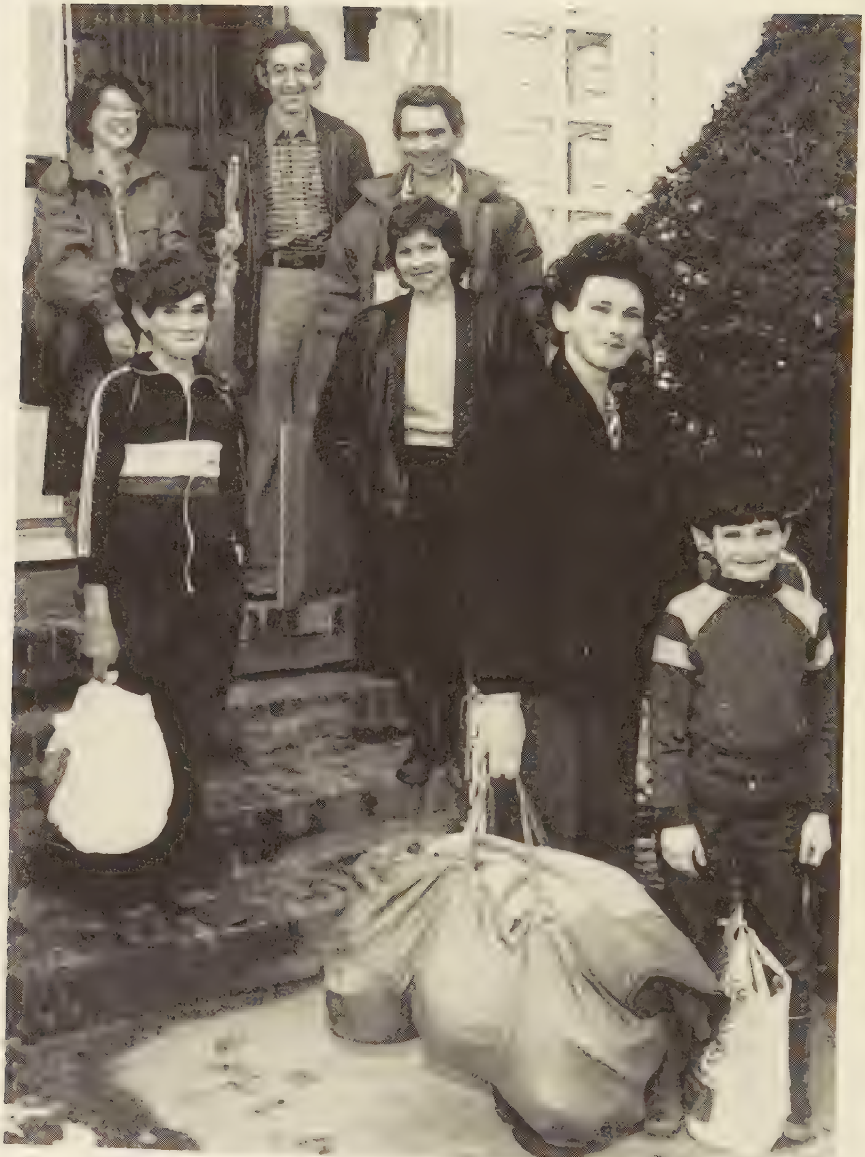


Figure 1. The author (top left) and her husband, Herbert Hoffman, (top right) help the Tsukanov family, refugees from Baku, Azerbaijan, move into their new apartment in West Hartford. Daniel and his older brother, Eugene, stand in front of their parents, Vladimir and Svetlana. To the left is the middle brother, Alexander. Only Vladimir and Eugene spoke a few words of English when they arrived.

INTRODUCTION

There has never been a time when I was not aware of the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union. Growing up in a kosher-salami-on-sliced-white-bread family in the 1950s, I was always intrigued by the possibility that I might have cousins somewhere behind the Iron Curtain, held captive by the forces of evil. How could I, born in Ohio and steeped in the Americana of that time and place, be related to people who were so different?

The links were my grandparents who had immigrated soon after the turn of the century and had raised their English-speaking children to blend into American life. Revolution, civil war, the internal changes of the Stalin era, and eventually Hitler's atrocities had cut them off from their families in the Ukraine and the Rumanian region of Bessarabia, now part of the Republic of Moldavia. Although my grandparents rarely talked about the Old Country, family legend has it that my grandfather left at the time of the Kishinev pogroms [anti-Jewish riots] and that he also wanted to avoid being drafted into the tsar's army during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. My aunt recounts tales of my grandmother's hiding during the pogroms of her childhood, and I remember her unhappiness that she had been excluded from the Ukrainian schools because she was a Jew and from the serious, male-oriented Jewish schools because she was a girl.

It was not until my husband and I visited Israel in 1965, however, that I met my first contemporary "Russian Jew." Evacuated from Poland into Russia during the war, David's parents had heard in the early 1960s that a few people were being granted exit visas from that country. As soon as they were repatriated to Poland, they sent David to Israel to establish residence so that the entire family could apply to leave.[1] Soon after meeting David, I was greatly affected by two books, *Between Hammer and Sickle* by Arie Eliav (1969) and *Jews of Silence* by Elie Wiesel (1966), which described the repression of the Jews in the U.S.S.R. While trying to imagine what my life might have been like had my grandparents remained there, I internalized the phrase that Eliav used repeatedly: "We have not forgotten you."

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I began to meet Soviet Jewish refugees in Hartford, Connecticut, where I now live, and to hear stories that again made me contemplate "what might have been." Several years later, in 1990, when the Jewish Family Service called upon the community for volunteers to assist the newcomers, we became the "American family" for refugees with no relatives in America. All three generations of "our" family had been born in Azerbaijan, in the old semi-desert city of Baku. The first generation, drawn by the promise of a new life away from the hardships of the designated areas where Jews had been forced to live before the Revolution, had migrated from Belarus around 1920. Even though their children and grandchildren had prospered, becoming engineers and doctors, all the members of the succeeding generations also chose to leave their homes to give their children new lives away from repression and anti-Semitism.

For about six months I visited or telephoned "our" family almost daily, drove them to doctors' appointments, filled out Medicaid forms, applied for Social Security cards, took them shopping at Mr. Amazing (a local odd-lot store they had heard about in their English class), registered the children for school, visited the grandfather in the hospital, and celebrated the Jewish holidays with them. They fed us Russian food and Jewish food and, best of all, garlicky oily Georgian eggplant. All of this was with no Russian on my part and minimal English on theirs. Eventually, they met other Russian-speakers and other Americans, the adults found jobs although not as oil engineers, and the boys settled into school. From this experience I not only developed friendships but also insight into the immigration process and its concomitant emotional turmoil.

The following year I began teaching English to those just coming off the plane, a job that plunged me into the lives of hundreds of other refugees from all parts of the Soviet Union. For nearly four years, as my adult students immersed themselves in the English program, I was introduced to the daily problems and issues they faced as they created new lives for themselves in the West. After I had taught them basic vocabulary, we talked about everything that concerned us: from the bad times during World War II to what we expected from our tax dollars (or rubles) and their love for American supermarkets and tag sales. We commemorated the anniversary of the day Minsk was bombed and cried for the loss of children, both to marriage to non-Jews who do not want to leave their homeland and to the effects of Chernobyl. They helped me to understand who they were, not just as refugees, unsure if they could ever become "Americans," but as individuals, proud of their survival as Jews and of their hard-won achievements in an anti-Semitic world. As I stood among them in the classroom, visitors frequently could not tell which of us was the teacher, and many times I saw the faces of my family reflected in those wrestling with the inconsistencies of English and struggling to understand the American mentality. If my grandparents had not left at the turn of the twentieth century and if my family had been lucky enough to get visas, I might have been on the other side of the desk.

Although my vestigial family connection to this group has always intrigued me, it was my training as an anthropologist, specializing in ethnic groups in complex societies, that propelled me into the research I have been conducting among Hartford's Soviet Jews for the past dozen years. From the beginning it was clear to me that I could not understand this group in the present until I understood its past because two pivotal events—the emigration of an estimated half of the Russian Jewish population between 1881 and 1930 and the Russian Revolution of 1917—had permanently changed the course of Jewish life in both Russia and in the United States. How had these two halves of the same original population developed independently and what were the dynamics that created the tensions I was seeing between their descendants: the American Jewish hosts and the Soviet Jewish newcomers? How did the larger context of geographical location define and otherwise affect the identification of Jews—both religious and secular—as individuals and as a group, particularly in light of anti-Semitism? How did Jewish identity affect choices and behaviors in Russia, later in the Soviet Union, and after immigration to Hartford as people decided where to live and which types of education, economic production, and family and friendship patterns to pursue? How did the actual content, loaded into the word *Jew* by the two groups differ? Finally, what was the resulting impact upon religious practice and Jewish community life?

Definitions and Demographics

Not only is group membership a complex issue that can be viewed from various perspectives, but the existence of boundaries can also be perceived in two main ways depending upon one's personal relationship to them: either as a positive separation from the uninitiated by the in-group (the Jews) or as a negative separation of the abnormal group members from the larger (Russian, Ukrainian, or other local) society that surrounds them. For Jews, the religious ideology spelled out in written codes and in oral tradition the roles, rights, and obligations of each category of members within the group. In the past and in some Jewish groups today, those who cross the boundaries into the outside world often do so with the knowledge that they are rejecting both family and community and that return will be difficult if not impossible. Over time, the boundaries maintained from the inside have given many Jews an enormous moral strength, which offsets to some degree their political, economic, and social weaknesses in the larger society. When expressed as anti-Semitism, however, this boundary maintenance from the outside has circumscribed Jews and has defined them as a negative force in the community because of their differences. Derrida sees this juxtaposition of one group against another as a critical factor in group identification and dynamics. "No culture is closed in itself, especially in our own times when the impact of European civilization is so all-pervasive. . . . Every culture is haunted by its other" (1984:116).

With a few notable exceptions[2]—particularly modern Israel—Jews have always been a minority, forced to act appropriately in terms of the dominant group. In the Soviet Union in 1970, for example, there were 103 official nationalities, each with distinctive features and relationships within its own group (Pipes 1975:457). Soviet Jews, interacting with any number of these and with the central government, developed an enormous range of social practices across the twelve time zones between Europe and the Bering Straits. As a complicating factor, there has rarely been a time when Russian or later Soviet anti-Semitism and other negative forces have not played a role to some degree in these relationships, molding Jewish life, limiting alternatives, and emphasizing the boundaries dividing them from the mainstream population.

Russian Jews

For the purposes of this study I have selected "Russian Jew" as the designation for those Ashkenazi[3] Jews who emigrated from the political entity of the Russian Empire between 1881 and the final implementation of all aspects of the U.S. Immigration Restriction laws (1924–1930). Although the term "Russian Jews" is in common usage for all Jews from the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union, in their home contexts "Jew" and "Russian" have always been distinct social categories. This category also includes some who were technically "Soviet Jews" in that they immigrated to the United States after the Revolution in 1917 but before the beginning of the stringent immigrant quotas. By 1929, the end of the open immigration period for "Russian Jews," there were estimated to be about 15 million Jews worldwide with about 3,600,000 living in the United States. Approximately two-thirds of the 2,338,941 Jews coming to America between 1881 and 1926 were from Poland, Russia, and Rumania. By the end of that period, New York City had the largest Jewish population in the United States with 1,643,012, followed by Chicago (285,000), Philadelphia (240,000), and Cleveland (78,996) (Wirth 1956:149–150). By 1920 Hartford had a Jewish population of approximately 18,000 (Silverman 1970:3), about 10 percent of its total population (Grant and Grant 1986:178).

Soviet Jews

Those Jews who remained in the Soviet Union after the Revolution or were born during the Communist years, I term "Soviet Jews." This also is a convenience for me and does not reflect the categories in which people place themselves. "Soviet Jews," then, make up the current population of émigrés including those who have come in the post-Soviet period since 1991.[4] This study, however, does not include the non-Ashkenazi Jews of Asia, such as the Georgian, Bukharan, and Mountain Jews (cf. Gitelman 1988:295–318) because they did not settle in Hartford. I do, however, include Ashkenazi Jews who may have relocated to those areas but remained part of the general "Soviet" culture.

Although few Soviet citizens received exit visas before 1970, increasing numbers of Jews have emigrated since then. Stripped of their citizenship as they left the U.S.S.R., the majority (before 1990) preferred to settle in the United States where they have been welcomed and in many cases substantially assisted by the organized American Jewish community. Between 1973 (when a total of 34,733 Jews fled from the Soviet Union) and 1984 (when the number dropped to

896 because of Soviet limits on emigration), more than 200,000 Jews found new homes in the West. At that time 32,168 families with 88,398 members arrived in the United States, settling in 213 different communities in 43 states (Stoppleman 1990:1). Of these, 128 families made up of 364 individuals settled in the Greater Hartford region (Siegel 1988:26–27). Few more arrived until late 1987 when the numbers began to rise again, with more refugees settling in Greater Hartford between October 1988 and May 1990 than in the entire preceding period.[5] Currently there are approximately 2,000 Soviet Jewish refugees in the area.

American Jews

Except for a brief time during the early colonial period, American Jews have never been a single homogeneous category. Although the earliest organized Jewish migrants—twenty-three refugees from the Inquisition in Brazil—arrived in 1654, these Sephardic Jews of Spanish and Portuguese ancestry never became a large group in America nor did their descendants have much impact as a collective upon the subsequent absorption of Jews from Russia even though individuals did contribute to their welfare (Hertzberg 1989:19).

Although Jews had migrated from Europe, particularly from Central Europe, Holland, and England throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the first large identifiable group—aside from the Sephardim in a few large Eastern cities—was that of the German Jews who had been part of a general German migration in the mid-nineteenth century. When the Russian and other Eastern European Jews began to arrive in large numbers, they found that both the general American population—insofar as it was aware of Jews at all—considered the German Jews with their particular norms and social and religious customs as the reference group, as did the German Jews themselves (Sachar 1990:115).

Over the course of this century in the United States—particularly after 1929 when immigration was strictly limited—the Russian Jewish immigrants became Americans, raising generations of American children and grandchildren who have never experienced the immigrant dislocations and reorganization. American Jews today are the descendants of these plus the approximately 250,000 refugees (Wyman 1968:209) who were allowed to immigrate immediately before and after World War II. The majority—except for those in the relatively small ultra-Orthodox communities and resident Israelis[6]—speak English as their first language and share a common American culture.

The most recent Hartford statistics, compiled in 1982 under the auspices of the Greater Hartford Jewish Federation, estimate that 25,000 to 26,000 Jews are distributed among 26 Central Connecticut towns (Abrahamson 1982:1). This distribution itself is a new factor since the turn of the century when most Jews lived in the city of Hartford. There were, in addition, several small self-contained Jewish communities, such as those in New Britain, Torrington, and Manchester, which were on the periphery of this region but did not interact with it to any significant degree. This shift in Jewish population, however, is not surprising given the national population migration to the suburbs after World War II. In 1982 only 2.4 percent (1,897)[7] of Hartford's population was Jewish, and the largest number of Jews (7,353) lived in West Hartford where they constituted 12 percent of the population (Abrahamson 1982:8). Currently West Hartford is home to the majority of the Soviet refugees. The Jewish population percentage of Greater Hartford remains at approximately 10 percent, just as it was in 1920. This is in marked contrast to national trends, however, when in 1990 Jews made up only 2.7 percent of the total general American population (Singer and Selden 1992:144).

Sources of Information

Cultural anthropologists who study contemporary groups depend on three main methods of gathering information: participation in group activities, observation of the group, and interviewing group members.[8] By immersing ourselves in the culture, our goal is to come as close to living as a group member as is possible for an outsider to do. Additionally, we talk to everybody who will talk to us, in some cases recording formal interviews with key informants and in others making notes from memory about informal conversations.

Unfortunately, participation-observation does not work when we are examining the past. Although I always "review the literature," which may include reading the published results of previous research projects, historical documents, theoretical analyses, and memoirs, I have found that the study of history demands a type of archival and library research that lacks—for an anthropologist—the immediacy of real people talking about their lives and cultures. As a compromise method, I have turned to interviewing to elicit oral histories from those who remember the past that I wish to explore. As an approach, oral history, which falls between document-based history and people-oriented anthropology, "promises unique insights that are profoundly historical in a somewhat special sense. By studying how experience, memory, and history become combined and digested by people who are the bearers of their own history and that of their culture, oral history opens up a powerful perspective." (Frisch 1990:13).

As an anthropologist, my main concern with using oral histories was that I had not participated in the events recalled by my informants and could not evaluate their relationship to the material nor the absolute accuracy of their memories. Ritchie (1995), however, believes that this in not a serious issue and that all of those who tell about the past—including by extrapolation the anthropologist whose ethnography is an account of past field work—"speak from their own points of view, and no two will tell a story exactly alike. . . . The contradictory tales told in the classic film *Rashomon* (1951) represent the tellers' differing impressions, self-images, and self-delusions, but not poor memories" (1995:13).

Since no memory is an exact photograph of the past, according to Maurice Halbwachs (1980:63–68 [1950]), the degree to which a recollection is a chronologically accurate review of events is not as important as the existence of the collective belief that something significant has occurred. Frequently these memories are transmitted through oral tradition, "the living bond of generations." Memory, therefore, provides a theoretical mechanism for sorting and symbolizing such events, detaching each item from its context and recombining them into a coherent—but not necessarily historically accurate—symbolic whole. One aspect of this is what Halbwachs terms the collective memory in which the group sees itself

> from within during a period not exceeding, and most often much shorter than, the average duration of a human life. It provides the group a self-portrait that unfolds through time, since it is an image of the past, and allows the group to recognize itself throughout the total succession of images. . . . What is essential is that the features distinguishing it from other groups survive and be imprinted on all its content. (1980:86–87 [1950])

Given these caveats on the impreciseness and symbolization of memory, on the inclination of people to remember only what was germane to them personally, and their tendency to "screen their memories in a selective, protective, and above all didactic fashion" (Frisch 1990:12), I evaluated all data gathered by this method in light of additional outside sources. As a result, the oral histories that have provided much of my ethnographic data have given me invaluable insights into the lives of both the Russian and Soviet Jews. Since many of my Soviet Jewish informants believe that the U.S.S.R. suppressed the truth about the contributions of Jews, including themselves, to their former homeland, they were unusually candid and determined to ensure that their experiences become an accurate part of the public record.

To learn about the immigration and resettlement of Russian Jews who came to Hartford between 1881 and 1929, I searched the oral history archives of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Ethnic History Project (Morton Tonken, interviewer), the Archives of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford (Emma Cohen, interviewer), and the University of Connecticut Ethnic Heritage Project (Matthew Magda, interviewer) and analyzed twelve in-depth interviews from these archives.[9] In addition, I interviewed four more individuals from the early period. One of these latter informants—Rachel Cohen[10]—was the only family link between the Russian Jews (1881–1930) and the first Soviet immigrants (1975–1983) in Hartford. Not only was Rachel's late husband a WPA informant and the WPA interviewer her nephew, but her great-nephew became a key informant from the Soviet period.

In order to become familiar with those Soviet Jews who have immigrated since 1975, the staff workers of the various local Jewish agencies, the volunteers, and the most recent refugees, I participated and observed in the Greater Hartford Soviet Jewish community for five years. This included my attending selected meetings, activities, and parties; volunteering through the Family-to-Family Program to work with a specific refugee family; becoming a board member for Family-to-Family; and teaching one portion of the English program for adult newcomers. In this last capacity I worked professionally with more than 250 students in my classes and interacted with an additional 150. I also conducted ten open-ended extensive individual interviews with volunteers and staff members.

Between 1988 and 1993 I conducted thirty-four more systematic, in-depth interviews with Soviet Jews who immigrated to Hartford between 1975 and 1983. I also used informal conversational information from four students, an essay from a fifth student, and material from four informants from my current oral history project: Witness to War: 1941–1945: The Soviet Jewish Experiences. Vladimir Kaplan conducted the interviews in Russian, Sergei Zaslavsky translated them, and I did the follow-up interviews in English. Together these interviews provided most of the ethnographic materials about the Soviet context. I selected informants from lists given to me by volunteers and professionals who had worked with them during the period immediately following immigration, referrals from a number of informants themselves, and personal acquaintances. Although this was not a random selection,[11] it does encompass approximately 10 percent of the population, and I believe that I was able to gather information that represents a full range of experience, ideology, and behaviors.

While it is understood that those refugees coming from different locations in the Soviet Union may have had important regional differences in experience, outlook, and style, any information they provided for me on this subject was tangential and without much depth. Overall, the informants were more concerned with telling me about their specific experiences vis-à-vis the Soviet and American systems than in analyzing various Soviet groups within the U.S.S.R. Therefore, this did not become an important avenue of research for this project.

I have edited the interviews from all sources for clarity, brevity, and syntax, removed the interviewers' questions, changed the names of most of the Soviet Jewish informants for privacy, and in some cases have deleted repetitions and reorganized the material so that it flows more smoothly (Frisch 1990:83–86). The purpose of these interviews was to determine the situation for Jews in the Soviet Union prior to their emigration in the 1970s and early 1980s, to develop a picture of Hartford and the assistance provided by the Hartford Jewish agencies and American volunteers, and to explore the previously stated issues of identity and sociocultural change. Although I gathered this information from individuals, I have been able to track trends in Hartford, some of which mirror those found in the literature. Because I have limited this study to examining and comparing the events and issues of ethnicity and how they have changed over time in relation to those who settled in the Greater Hartford area, I did not interview Soviet Jews who live in other cities. Additionally, I understand that the small size of both Hartford and the sample may qualify the identification of some trends.

"The Literature"

Jews have a long history, illuminated by a variety of archaeological artifacts and written records; an enormous body of knowledge, legend, and law; a number of different languages; insular communities and international connections, all of which have generated an extensive and varied literature.[12] The examination of the American Jewish experience falls into two main categories: those works dealing specifically with Jewish issues and those analyzing Jews as one aspect of American life.[13] The analysis of Jewish identity from the Soviet Jewish perspective has not been a major issue for researchers compared to the immediate practical problems of resettlement, language acquisition, and preparation for economic independence which face both the newcomers and the Jewish agencies responsible for easing this transition. Most community studies are concerned with how to help people efficiently, effectively, and economically.[14]

Two detailed ethnographies of the large Soviet populations in San Francisco (Gold 1992) and Brighton Beach in New York (Markowitz 1993) provide broader pictures of the Soviet Jewish resettlement patterns in those cities during the late 1980s. While Gold compared Soviet Jews to another refugee population in that area, the Vietnamese, Markowitz explored social change and community development in the largest Soviet Jewish population center in America (about 50,000 at that time). Concerned with the creation of community, she postulates that while a sense of Soviet Jewish community exists, it is informal with "quasi institutions" in contrast to the highly institutionalized community formed by their Russian Jewish predecessors at the turn of the century. Although Markowitz believes that Soviet Jews perceive "community" and participate in it, this is on their own terms, which may differ from the expectations of American Jews, particularly those who are involved in organized Jewish groups such as synagogues, federations, and Jewish welfare agencies.

In light of Markowitz's findings, it is important to note here that any immigrant group's style of adaptation to America is tied, in part, to its relationship on a variety of levels with the organized immigrant community that preceded it (Benkin and DeSantis 1982:231–48, Mittleberg and Waters 1992:412–35). Although the previously established group—in this case the American Jews—may become a reference point for the newcomers in terms both of identity and of practical accommodation to the new life, most adult members of the immigrant generation will never become "American Jews" in the sense that Jewish community activists define the term. American Jews have clear ideas of what it means to be a Jew in America with specific expectations for the Soviet Jews, particularly in relation to religious practice and community involvement.[15] Despite the questions raised by American Jews about the authenticity of the Soviet Jewish identity, Soviet Jews "know" that they are Jews even if their definition and personal experiences differ markedly from others, a crucial issue that will be explored in this study.

Elbert Siegel's unpublished dissertation (1988) on the styles and uses of mutual aid by the Soviet Jews of Hartford has provided an invaluable statistical analysis that has made it possible for me to add some numerical insights about this population without replicating his research. Many of Siegel's statistics combine responses from both Hartford and New Haven, the latter not in my study. His total group represents about 75 percent of Soviet Jews living in Connecticut between 1975 and 1983 and provides an important overview of this cohort.

Theoretical Analysis in a Complex World

My interest in this study has been to track the changing Jewish behavior patterns and definitions as individuals analyzed their Russian or later Soviet worlds and decided to emigrate, eventually creating new lives in Hartford, Connecticut. The economically based approach of resource allocation and behavioral strategies of Bennett (1969) and Barth (1967, 1969) has provided me with a theoretical framework for examining individual behavioral choices as they build into social trends (or remain no more than isolated acts of individual choice). The assumption here is that individuals weigh the incentives and constraints of their perceived alternatives for action and then decide which option is best for themselves in terms of resources expended. Sociocultural change occurs at pivotal transition points (critical junctures) when individuals make new choices about allocating resources, alter their behavior accordingly, and then effectively communicate this new behavior strategy to a sufficient number of group members who adopt the change. Bennett's focus on adaptive behavior is particularly germane when discussing emigrants who must examine their worlds before making the decision to reject them in favor of new lives in the unknown. His "emphasis here is not on relationships between institutions, groups or aggregates of data, but on patterns of behavior: problem-solving, decision-making, consuming or not consuming, inventing, innovating, migrating, staying" (1969:11). Since Barth (1967) believes that people make strategic allocations in terms of the payoffs their previous experience leads them to expect, he sees sociocultural change as resulting from considered decision making based on what individuals, and eventually the group, perceive as more effective patterns of allocating their resources so as to gain desired ends.

Decisions for most Russian and Soviet emigrant Jews have been filtered through a Jewish microcosm, positioned within an anti-Semitic macrocosm. Whether people remained in the homeland or emigrated, the costs often entailed separation from family and from community support and/or friendship networks, complete alienation from their previous lives, and in the worst cases imprisonment or death. The incentives for change were freedom—defined differently in the two distinct periods—and a better life without the limitations of anti-Semitism.

Since it is impossible to employ this resource-allocation / behavioral-strategies approach in a vacuum, in light of the diversity of Jewish life in various historical periods and geographic locations, the most useful theoretical context for me to set it into is that of "ethnicity" or "ethnic identity." The study of ethnic groups—nationalities in the Soviet Union—and their interrelationships cut across class lines and include all of those who identify themselves as part of a specific "people." Because Jewish identity plays a crucial role in group life[16] and in determining the articulation of many Jews with the outside world, the intertwining of ethnicity and ideology expressed as religion is particularly relevant, as is the relationship of group members to the religion itself.

Although I am aware that socioeconomic stratification and gender are significant factors in delineating group identity, these markers were not my focus because ethnic identity was a legal as well as a social category in both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Inasmuch as the label of "Jew" was a "stigma," an "attribute that is deeply discrediting"[17] (Goffman 1963:3), its negative implications overrode all other group distinctions for Jews. At the turn of the century in Hartford, the status of "Russian Jewish immigrant" was also definitive although this may have been, in part, because almost all of those falling into this category arrived within the same general level of poverty.[18]

How, then, do we define ethnicity theoretically and how can we apply the resultant concept to understanding Jewish group life? I see ethnicity theory as having divided along two basic approaches. The first, as articulated by Max Weber (1978:389–93 [1922]), assumes that each ethnic group is a coherent system centered around a basic essence and expressed in terms of particular beliefs, behaviors, social constructs, symbols, and attitudes. All of those identified in terms of a specific ethnicity are expected to subscribe within relatively narrow parameters to its ethos and to be recognizable as members by both those inside and outside the group. The implication in this classic ethnicity theory is not only of a fixed set of reference points for authenticity but also of the possibility, indeed the probability, that there will always be members who drift from the group, indifferent to its cultural content and/or drawn to the alternatives offered by other sectors of the society. This drift—or assimilation—is frequently interpreted by those who remain within the boundaries as a diminution of group integrity (Hertzberg 1989:377–88).

For the study of Jewish identity, an understanding of the problems inherent in determining a reference point against which to measure subsequent Jewish life is significant because Jews are an internally heterogeneous people who have lived in a variety of settings for thousands of years and have developed a variety of "authentic" Jewish religious and secular expressions. It is far from surprising that the Jews from such diverse places as Ethiopia, Russia, and Spain have developed customs and behaviors predicated not only upon religious ideology but also upon the folkways of the peoples among whom they made their homes. Given this degree of internal diversity, as Barth (1992:3) has pointed out, we cannot expect to reduce any society to a basic essence with variation seen as deviance.

Nonetheless, two basically unanswerable questions arise if we do not view Jewish identity along these lines: What are the standards that delineate "Jewishness"? and How can Jews assure continuity if there are no agreed upon definitions? These are issues that have troubled me greatly, because what I was finding—diversity in definition, belief, and behavior within the label of "Jew"—was incongruent with my own desire to see Jews in Weber's terms and to collect useful information for those community institutions planning for the Jewish absorption and education of refugees from the Soviet Union.

My results, however, have forced me to view the ethnicity of the Soviet Jews from a second, more dynamic perspective. Here, ethnic symbols—both their relationship to each other within the group and to the society in which the group lives—and their employment within these various relationships become the core of ethnicity. From this viewpoint, it becomes futile to attempt to formulate a precise definition of authenticity for any group, to determine in-group status based upon a single historical definition, or "to speak of authentic as opposed to false ethnic culture, implying that only one deserves cultivation; it is useless to try to distinguish between one existentially lived or symbolic ethnicity, as if the first were real and the latter were a mere supportive romp" (Boelhower 1987:132).

I believe that the series of political, economic, and technological revolutions and the population shifts that have taken place throughout the world during the past century and their concomitant social transformations have affected the identities of individuals and their degree of identification with their customary social categories. Even the most traditional groups, remaining in their ancestral geographical locations, are coming into contact with others who were not previously within their experience, forcing everyone to become aware of complexity and variation as individuals are exposed to new stimuli.

Modernity with all of its ramifications must now be viewed in light of "rootlessness and mobility," which alters previous cultural realities, requiring that "individuals and groups improvise local performances from (re-)collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols, and languages" (Clifford 1988:14). There are no "pure" groups among immigrants (cf. Clifford 1988:1–17, Sollors in Boelhower 1987:2), no reference point beyond the individual for the "authentic" because even the immigrants from the same place came from diverse social settings over time. Immigrants who are out of context have become inauthentic in terms of the old definitions, having already plunged into the process of creating new identities. Since it has never been possible to transplant the previous world of the ethnic *in toto,* all ethnic behavior in new contexts must be a re-creation and a response to the new environment. Therefore, we can assume that every group, migrating at the turn of the twentieth century, has been transformed in a variety of ways, creating new American forms that differ markedly from both those of the past and from those brought by modern migrants from the original homelands. All of these employ a variety of ethnic symbols that continually alter the heart of the specific ethnicity.

In the United States and the Soviet Union, as the intertwined political, educational, economic, and social systems have changed, ethnicity has been affected, eliciting different strategies for success in the new worlds and creating new cultural identities for both the group and for the individuals within each group. In America new behaviors and personality characteristics (flexibility, creativity, individuality, the questioning of authority, and personal decision making without reference to a context group—even one as small as the extended family) are valued, altering ethnic and religious behavior. In many cases, individuals do not need or want the pervasive cultures of their grandparents but choose to identify with a limited number of symbols—abstracted from the previous traditional life—whose employment does not demand an inordinate amount of time from their mainstream lives (Gans 1979:9). Not requiring active daily commitment, this "symbolic ethnicity" is for Jews generally the focus of holidays and family occasions. While a distant memory of the Jewish religion remains, the forms, content, and boundaries have altered to fit the new environment, and many if not most of the distinct behaviors and beliefs that have, over time, defined Jews and Jewish life are redefined by the nontraditional.[19]

Many individuals are not interested in the constraints inherent in ethnicity but in ethnicity as a way of dealing with the world, a filter through which they may view their options and in many cases as an enrichment of their multifaceted lives. According to Boelhower, "The issue, therefore, is not ethnicity *per se* but the *uses* of ethnicity in a post-industrial society" (1987:120). In addition, Americans tend to see ethnicity as an extension of family, perhaps with a vague connection to place and—with the exception of ethnicity as it interacts with race[20]—as partially, if not wholly, voluntary (Waters 1990:19–20).

Even though white Europeans, as exemplified by the Soviet Jews, may interpret ethnicity in terms of an ascribed nationality, the reality once they arrive in America is that nationality is rapidly transformed into an American ethnicity, which becomes increasingly voluntary and symbolic as they and particularly their children, over time, adapt to the American mores. Thus, according to Stuart Hall, we can expect that identity will evolve as the social context changes. "Cultural identity . . . is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation" (1990:225).

For Jewish traditionalists and those who view Judaism as a fixed entity, Hall's concept of "becoming" and constantly being in "production" is at the least uncomfortable and at the most untenable unless the individual is involved in "returning" to orthodox religious practice. Nevertheless, Hall's conceptualizations are at the heart of the perennial debate among Jews over Who is a Jew? In a decade-long, nationwide study, Bershtel and Graubard (1992) have documented this process as many American Jews move away from traditional European practices and develop diverse and unique American Jewish forms.[21] It is evident that Jewish life is rapidly and radically changing, a fact acknowledged by all sectors of organized American Jewry and commented on endlessly in the Jewish media. How this change is perceived depends upon the relationship of the analysts to the Jewish environment.

Although this study is rooted in the historical experience, and I am aware that many immigrants may be trying—albeit unsuccessfully—to reconstruct what they perceive of as the "authentic" of their own homeland, my goal is not to measure social change in terms of the distance between the perceived "authentic" and the "attenuated," or "assimilated," but to examine the changing environments and relationships that have generated the variety of twentieth-century Jewish identities in Russia, the Soviet Union, and Hartford. I believe that the constantly shifting dynamics of ethnic group identity are broad enough and flexible enough to permit diverse individuals to unite within the rubric of a given ethnicity even if they do not hold precisely the same world view nor invest the same meaning in all of their symbols. Thus, ethnicity as an analytic approach—in this second sense of a dynamic reevaluation and reconstruction of Jewish identity—provides a context for understanding "Jewish" interpretations of group life, individual behavioral choices, and group strategies.

In the following chapters I will explore a series of dimensions of Jewish community life which define the context and conditions in Russia, in the Soviet Union, and Hartford in two time periods as they affect life decisions and concomitant changes in behavior for Jews. This will include an examination of alternatives available to Jews, including those generated by outside political and social forces, particularly anti-Semitism, which acted upon them as individuals and as a group. Specifically, within each period I will focus upon key issues of politics and power, ideology and religion, kinship and social structure, educational opportunities, and economic production. Since I believe that community life constitutes a system, new pressures that alter any aspect will generate change throughout and will call for new responses. These, in turn, will affect the ethnic identity of group members who find themselves within a new social-political-economic context.

PART I

THE TRANSFORMATION OF JEWISH LIFE IN TWO CONTEXTS, 1881–1970

1

The Old Country

> A Jew was under the handicap of being a Jew, and this handicap followed him throughout his life.
>
> —Isaac Waldman

Ethnicity and Anti-Semitism: Critical Boundaries

There has never been a time in Russian-Jewish history—traditionally dated from the First Jewish Exile from Jerusalem between 586 and 538 B.C.—that Jews were not identified as members of a distinct ethnic group, characterized by its religious practices. Although Jews were accepted to a greater degree in some areas and historical periods than in others, both the host societies and the Jews themselves recognized essential boundaries and focused on the divisions. The fact that these differences were visible and constant evoked opposite responses from the dominant group and from the Jews with the former frequently attributing negative connotations to Jewish belief, practice, and appearance while the latter organized a positive identity around the same traits. Because of the hostility directed toward them from all levels of society, Jews were excluded from many regions and relegated to others so that most lived in Jewish enclaves where they maintained the traditions that encompassed all facets of their daily lives. Even within individual villages and neighborhoods, Jewish social life was isolated from that of their neighbors and coalesced around kinship, community, and a religion they believed marked them as God's Chosen People. That others chose to see Jews in a different light did not detract from this intrinsic Jewish truth.

Over the centuries, these differences became even more significant as the Jews were caught up in the turmoil and politics of the regions where they settled. By the early sixteenth century the Jews had become the center of an institutionalized anti-Semitism and a focus for Russian frustrations, fears, and anger that had little to do with the group itself (Pinkus 1988:7–8). For the next century and a half the tsars concentrated on preventing the Jews from "polluting" what they perceived as the pure homogeneous Russian Orthodox religion. One manifestation of this was the harsh treatment meted out to the established Jewish communities of Poland and Lithuania when Russian armies under Tsar Alexei

Mikhailovich (1645–1676) conquered those regions. With many Polish and Lithuanian Jews killed outright and others transported into Russia, the irony of Alexei's policy was that a number of the exiles remained in Russia and became the nucleus of the Ashkenazi Jewish settlement there (Baron 1976:8–9). These, however, were small groups compared to the large numbers remaining in Poland.

It was not until the partitions of that country under Catherine II at the end of the eighteenth century and the annexation of former Polish territories with nearly half a million Jews, that Jews became a permanent, increasing presence within the Russian Empire. Restricted by law to the twenty-five western provinces of the enlarged Russian Empire, primarily to the annexed regions, most Jews lived in what came to be known as the Pale of Settlement (Johnson 1987:304). In addition, many Jews living outside this area were required to have residence and work permits, which could be revoked at any time.

Living conditions in the nineteenth century varied considerably for the Jews, depending on where they lived and their economic status. Nonetheless, for both rich and poor, residential location was determined by ethnic identity. In 1897 5.2 million Jews lived in the Russian Empire with all but 345,000 of them in the Pale. Nearly half lived in the small traditional villages, the *shtetlach,* where Jews survived under marginal economic conditions, if not in abject poverty, while maintaining their traditional Yiddish culture (Gilbert 1990:51). Michael Singer[1] who eventually settled in Hartford, Connecticut, grew up in the Pale.

> I was born in the little town of Kachinovitch, Grodno, which boasted a population of about 5,000 people. 20 percent of the inhabitants, who were Jews, were concentrated in the center of town. The town itself was laid out in a circular fashion with offshoots leading to the outskirts, which were populated mostly by poor tenant farmers. There were no sidewalks, nor, for that matter, were there any streets in the modern sense of the word. The houses were built around a vacant, rutty lot, which served as a market and central meeting place for the inhabitants. The houses were constructed mostly of wood. They were one-story affairs, dilapidated, ugly, and old. A few of the richer people had brick houses. The public buildings consisted of a large and beautiful church, an old wooden structure that served as a synagogue, and a little cottage that housed the police force, a chief and his assistant. (Tonken 1938)

In that same year, Jews made up 52 percent of the combined urban population in Lithuania and White Russia, with many living in Jewish neighborhoods (Baron 1976:68). In these regions and in the other large cities of the Pale, Jews led very different lives from those in villages. Some retained their religious orientation and held onto the Jewish customs and values and while other nominal Jews ignored the behaviors of the past and attempted to create new strategies designed to enhance their cosmopolitan lives. Since Russian society defined people permanently according to ethnicity, social class, and religion, living a secular life without reference to any ethnic group was rarely an option. Those Jews wishing to escape the density of the Jewish world had few alternatives. No matter how sophisticated and "international" migrants to the cities considered themselves to be, they were still identified as Jewish by the rest of the population. Unless Jews converted formally to Russian Orthodoxy, they were subject to the constraints that limited the choices available to all but a fortunate few, and they could not escape that classification even though they might reject characteristic Jewish behaviors.

Assassination

On March 1, 1881, members of the revolutionary group *Narodnaia Volia,* the People's Will, assassinated Tsar Alexander II for not relinquishing his power to an elected assembly. Although only a single Jewish woman was implicated, the rumor that the Jews had murdered the Tsar began to circulate throughout the country (Sanders 1988:5; Johnson 1987:361–365, Pinkus 1988:23–27). Bolstered by the advice of his conservative advisors and the popular view that Jews were not only "exploiters" of the peasants but were also subversives, dangerous to the established Christian order and working actively to overthrow it, the new Tsar, Alexander III, immediately launched his anti-Semitic policies.

The first anti-Jewish riots of this period began on April 27, 1881, in Yelisavetgrad in southern Russia, ushering in a wave of virulent pogroms which lasted into 1882 and affected about 225 Jewish communities including the Jewish neighborhoods in the city of Kiev. Approximately 20,000 Jews were left homeless, 100,000 had their livelihoods destroyed, and more than $80 million in Jewish property was destroyed (Dawidowicz 1982:13). This trend toward anti-Semitic mob violence continued for approximately forty years with some periods relatively free from pogroms and others racked with murder and destruction.

In 1882 the government initiated a series of repressive legislative measures beginning with the May Laws, which restricted the areas where Jews could live even more stringently, forcing many out of rural regions into designated towns and cities and out of the large cities located outside of the Pale. Between 1882 and the outbreak of the Revolution in 1917, the Jews were increasingly limited in all aspects of daily life by more than one hundred anti-Jewish laws (Gitelman 1988:13–15).[2] Vast numbers of Jews—relegated to primitive living conditions, unable to make a living, and harassed by mobs—began to flee their homes, envisioning a better life almost anywhere else. Many moved from one part of the Pale to another, while others began the long journeys which would take them to North America, Western Europe, South America, South Africa, and Palestine.[3] This population shift became an enormous trend in Jewish life, eventually transforming Jewish demographics, religious expression, economic production, social forms, and the exercise of political power.

Politics and Power

Meanwhile, the philosophical underpinning for change, the general secular intellectual Enlightenment—the *Haskalah*—of Western Europe (approximately 1750 to 1880) had begun to touch the Jews of the Pale in several ways, offering potential new ways for dealing with the Russian world around them (Pinkus 1988:39). Most Jewish reformers attempted to effect change within their own communities through education, the publication of secular works in Yiddish and Hebrew, and the revitalization of Hebrew as a spoken language, all of which introduced new topics for discourse into the Jewish consciousness from a variety of opposing views. As a result, many political groups sprang up in all sorts of combinations of socialism, Zionism, religious tradition, the rejection of religious tradition, and radical and/or revolutionary ideologies and methods. In addition, many Jews began to look with interest toward the secular world. For some, this eventually led to new ways of life including that of participation in the mainstream as "modern" individuals: as secular ethnic Jews, as complete assimilationists, or as revolutionaries—most frequently as intellectuals and theorists in the emerging socialist and communist movements. Despite the growing trends toward modernization and secularization among the Jews, many individuals believed that there was little hope of their situation improving at any level without a fundamental political and social transformation. Even so, many were content to continue their traditional lives within the confines of Jewish law and custom and to conduct their affairs in the manner of their parents, removed from the controversies that would eventually lead to the demise of the Russian Empire and the development of the Soviet system.[4]

Two organizations, the Jewish Socialist Democratic Union—the Bund—and the World Zionist Organization, both founded in 1897, touched Jews throughout the Pale, connecting them to Jews in other countries and serving as pivotal points for change. Like all political movements in tsarist Russia, both were illegal. The former, an outgrowth of the emerging socialist movement, focused on the internationalism of all workers, as conceptualized by Karl Marx, as the solution to problems of the Jews. By 1900 the Bund had 5,600 members, which increased to 30,000 during its heyday from 1903 to 1905 (Pinkus 1988:43). More than a simple political affiliation for its members, the Bund gave those who had moved away from the traditional life a social framework and a center for secular Yiddish culture (Gitelman 1988:26).

Unlike the Bund, the World Zionist Organization was not interested in creating a lasting Jewish culture in Russia but in building a complete Jewish society in a Jewish nation without the constraints imposed upon them by a hostile society. Organized by Western Jews, Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau, it drew many Russian Jews who became deeply involved in the Zionist movement, providing much of the socialist ideological framework for the future state of Israel, early workers on the land, and many of the leaders during both the planning stages and eventually in the Israeli state itself (Appel 1965:15–25; Johnson 1987:439–42). While some rabbis decried Zionism as an illegal political movement, fearing that it would anger the authorities who would retaliate against the community as a whole (Heilman 1972:30), others objected to the concept of a Jewish homeland created by man before the coming of the Messiah. Still others, primarily Rabbis Isaac Jacob Reines and Samuel Mohilever, were ardent Zionists, working within the framework of Mizrachi, the religious Zionist movement (Grayzel 1968:584–85). Despite the theoretical wrangling, increasing numbers of ordinary Jews believed that Zionism was the only salvation for an oppressed people whose lives were circumscribed by anti-Semitism (Margolis and Marx 1956:714–15). Benjamin Cohen was a member of a Zionist family in Uman.

> My father belonged to a Zionist organization whose main function was to raise money for Palestine. Each of the members was assessed a lump sum of money according to his wealth and social standing for dues. They would meet every two weeks or so, hear reports on the terrible plight of their brethren in Palestine, and then vote on the amount of money to be sent in order to ease that particular plight. My brother and I also belonged to a young Zionist group which was really organized and controlled by the older folks. Our function was to arrange some social affairs and raise money. The only reason I joined this young Zionist group was because of the social functions in the form of dances, parties. (Tonken 1938)

Zionism and migration to a homeland that did not exist did not appeal to a large percentage of the Jewish population, and other types of visionaries looked to the popular socialist philosophies, which advocated radical change in Russia. Arlene Rubin's family fell into this category.

> My parents were interested in everything that would help the Jews, but they weren't involved in any way in Zionist organizations. I was brought up in the revolutionary spirit. I didn't like the Tsar. I didn't like anything that was going on. Whenever there was an unrest, my father would tell me that this Tsar was doing these bad things to the people. It was the people he was interested in. (Cohen 1981)

The single window of political opportunity during this period was the Revolution of 1905 when, after months of protest and a general strike, the Tsar was forced to form a national parliament, the Duma. Although the introduction of the Duma promised a future of reform, it was effectively undercut by political maneuvering, and the abortive revolution became a focus for the resumption of anti-Semitic pogroms throughout the Pale (Gitelman 1988:34–35). Sonya Gersten of Marsea in the Velinske Gubernia recalls those days.

> The Tsar gave us freedom on October 17, and the revolutionaries let us know that we should come and have a big meeting, a rally to celebrate the

> freedom that they gave us. We went to a courtyard, a very large one, and they had about three or four thousand people there and a lot of speakers. We were singing and dancing, and we were celebrating. We were very very happy. All of a sudden a boy rushed over and said, "Run away because the soldiers are around us. They surrounded us. It's all over." We were all revolutionaries, all kinds, most of them Jews. We started to run away. We were planning to go to the jails and let out the revolutionaries, all young boys, because I knew them, but they killed all the boys who were in jail. This revolution didn't last at all, and then they started to have pogroms. Kill! Kill! (Cohen 1968)

As external political forces for change were moving toward a climax, Jews had no choice but evaluate their current lives and their futures in terms of both individual and group Jewish identity in the Russian Empire. Many of those who had placed their faith in revolutionary groups began to realize that to be welcome in radical circles they would have to conceal their origins because of anti-Semitism (Gitelman 1988:17–19). Some Jewish radicals became disillusioned by attacks on themselves as Jewish individuals, as a part of a group not valued by society, and by the condoning by some of their fellow group members of the pogroms as a necessary step in the education of the masses as they moved toward revolution. Some of these disenchanted joined the Marxists and remained committed to socialism. Others turned to Zionism, while still others set out on the road to emigration.

Religion and Ideology: The Basis for Social Cohesion

Religion in the Pale was all-encompassing, organizing intrafamily relationships and roles, the community itself, and the ties to the outside world. Although, there were differences of opinion and divisions within the Russian Jewish world about which style of orthodox behavior and worship was most appropriate, the various patterns had more in common than not and differed considerably from the distinctions and behaviors that divide Jewish groups today. Overall, Jewish leadership rejected any strategies that led away from religious conformity and solidarity, and the traditional forms of life continued until the great watersheds of revolution and/or emigration.

The source of Jewish law, the Torah, and the extensive rabbinic commentaries developed over the centuries provided not only an ideology that gave people collective strength in a hostile environment but also a code of behavior they were expected to follow (Johnson 1987:162). With specific rules and customs for every aspect of daily life throughout the life cycle, Jewish home life ideally centered around the paternalistic family within the community and the community within the religious framework. Both men and women knew precisely what was expected of them at every step although not everyone chose to behave in the expected ways. Michael Singer grew up in this atmosphere.

> It is natural for us to be very religious, living in such a small town. Synagogue services were attended regularly, and the Rabbi was looked upon as the holiest of men and rated next to God himself as an object to which homage was paid. Anyone deviating from this form of belief was looked upon as an infidel and an outcast from society. Anyone not believing in the Bible literally was called a fool and an imbecile. Our synagogue taught us these strong beliefs and that we should abide by its teachings. (Tonken 1938)

There were, of course, free thinkers in the villages as well as in the cities, but they did not always broadcast their beliefs or lack of them because they did not want to become the focus of community disapproval. One of these was Isaac Waldman.

> I was not very religious, but my family was rather Orthodox. Although in Hebrew school I was taught to believe literally in the Bible, nevertheless, my intellectual integrity did not allow me to swallow everything hook, line, and sinker. I observed things closely and had my own opinions about man, things which would have shocked the Rabbi had he only known. There were some people who openly violated some of the precepts of religion, but these people were tolerated and allowed to do what they pleased because they were students or intellectuals. (Tonken 1938)

For many of those who did not subscribe to the prevailing religious ethic, the cohesiveness of the traditional religious community with its concomitant monitoring of proper Jewish behavior was stifling. The most common behavioral pattern for those individuals objecting to the status quo was to leave the community, a trend which was increasing as the effects of the Enlightenment introduced new concepts into the Jewish consciousness and the deteriorating political and economic conditions called for new responses. Representing this trend was the family of Arlene Rubin, whose parents prided themselves on their modernity. This was symbolized by their use of the Russian versions of their names, by their having only minimal contact with their traditional families in the *shtetl,* and by her father's revolutionary activities. Nevertheless, the Rubins were ambivalent about their Jewish identity.

> My parents were not observant Jews. You see, in a big city like Ekaterinoslav you didn't have a ghetto or a Jewish community that I was aware of. Our friends were Jewish. They were Russian. They were all nationalities, but not specifically Yiddish. My mother always taught me to love

> my people. I went to the synagogue only once because my mother wanted to hear the *Kol Nidre* [an important Yom Kippur prayer]. She was hungry for it because she was brought up in very, very Jewish environment. (Cohen 1981)

Surrounded and constrained by neighbors who were, with few exceptions, indifferent at best and sometimes violent, informal support networks of family, friends, and neighbors were supplemented by a variety of Jewish community organizations. These included court systems, schools, hospitals, hostels, burial societies, artisans' groups, and charitable groups such as those that provided dowries for needy brides and alms for the indigent. Much of this community organization and the communal spirit which it engendered came under the rubric of religion with both men and women contributing in their traditional spheres. People were expected to be generous in ways appropriate to their social and economic status, their educational attainments or their personal piety.

For the most traditional Jews, religious observance and its integrated social structure became the critical constraint militating against emigration. With many influential rabbis and heads of the rabbinical seminaries—the *yeshivot*—-adamant in their belief that immigration to a Godless land (specifically the United States) would result in the decimation of religious life, they continually warned against such a move (Hertzberg 1989:158). While many of those outside the sphere of these particular leaders and less committed to observance in their specific style ignored their injunctions against emigration, many of the most Orthodox remained in Russia and Eastern Europe.[5]

Education

Religion among traditional Jews has always been linked to education with the most respected and learned of men being revered for their ability to explicate the mysteries of the Torah, its commentaries, and other religious texts (Wirth 1956:249). A main theme in Jewish life, therefore, has always been the education of the children. As in almost all other aspects of life in the Pale, the choices that parents made concerning education depended on where they lived, the socioeconomic status of the family, the degree to which the family held to traditional Jewish values and practice, and the sex of the child with girls almost always receiving educations substantially different from their brothers.

By the turn of the century, a variety of new educational forms had developed. Not only did the traditional *khadorim*—private, religious grammar schools—remain popular, as did the *yeshiviot,* but families in many areas had new choices. Among them were the Zionist schools where the language of instruction was Hebrew and separate schools were provided for girls, a new form of Talmud Torah with some secular subjects, Yiddish secular schools, private Russian language schools for boys and girls, and government schools. In addition, the political turmoil seething within the wider Russian world, combined with the local expressions of anti-Semitism also affected the type of education parents were able to select for their children (Gitelman 1988:41–42). For those of limited means, however, even though the parents might hold to the ideal of education, attendance at school became a luxury for some if not all of the children in a family. In some cases the children themselves fought for education, selecting a strategy at odds with the economic reality of the situation or with the traditional religious atmosphere of the home. By 1900, almost all Jewish children learned to read and write Yiddish with about 30 percent of the men and 16 percent of the women literate in Russian as well. Rosa Lurie[6] of Kiev describes the type of education believed appropriate for the children in her traditional home.

> When the Jewish boy became three years old, his father usually took him covered in a talis and went with him to the *khador.* Uncle had a *khador*—not big—and taught them. Usually in small cities the kitchen was big, and in the kitchen was a table. The family had dinner at that table, but when the children came for learning, they were sitting around the table in the kitchen, and he taught them Yiddish. Only boys. When my older sister finished school, she used to take into our rooms some children. She taught them in the Russian language, and after two or three years, they were able to go to school—third grade or fourth—not from the beginning. I also went to the school from third grade. Before, I learned from my sister in Russian language but Yiddish talking!

In contrast to the traditional education, Ben Cohen, the son of an educated middle class family in Uman, attended a modern high school.

> All of the children, including myself, had a preparatory and a high school education. The children read Jewish [Yiddish language] and Russian books, Father read the three kinds [Hebrew as well], and Mother only the Jewish ones. In our school curriculum the girls were required to take French and German, and the boys French, German, and Latin. One of my sisters took dancing lessons for a while and was actually good at it. I played the violin for a very short time but gave it up because I neither liked it nor cared to stay away from play just for the purpose of practicing. My parents showed some discrimination among the children as far as education was concerned. They considered high school sufficient for the girls, but the boys were to go on with their studies. My sisters were to be married soon after they acquired some degree of learning. Plans were made for my brother and me to go to a university, but circumstances prevented these plans from being carried out. (Tonken 1938)

The intertwining of religion, ethnicity, and education—particularly for boys—was yet another factor that set the Jews apart from the mainstream society.

Although the direct link between religion and education might become frayed as secular education became more widely available, the religious tradition of affording prestige to scholars carried over into the new worlds of the U.S.S.R. and the United States and paved the way for the enormous movement of Jews into secular education, leading to new economic roles in both contexts.

Economic Production under Anti-Semitic Pressure

During the tenure of Alexander II (1855–1881) Russia had seen a number of reforms, the most far-reaching of which was the emancipation of the serfs. Although many Jews had believed that emancipation was an indicator of major change that would improve their economic situation, in many cases the serfs, leaving the rural areas, came into direct competition with Jewish workers in industry. Following the Tsar's assassination in 1881, the government instituted economic quotas restricting those Jews who wished to enter the various professions, to hold government jobs, or to own land. As the trend toward government regulation increased and the economy shrank, life became precarious for many. In both cities and villages, occupations that had provided good livings or at least enough to feed a family were now outlawed for Jews, crowded with newcomers forced out of their previous occupations or locations, or simply squeezed by the increasing Jewish population competing for a place in the economy. Since few Jews had access to their own equipment or capital, they were frequently forced to work for others as middlemen, agents, or wholesalers. Additionally, many worked in home workshops, using their families as supplementary labor. Herschel Gottesman's father made a moderate living for his family in a small town.

> I was born in the Ukraine, the bread basket of Russia. A Jew was not allowed to have a field and farm. So naturally the Jewish people tried to make a living in the city and town. This one had a little store, and this one had a little bigger store, and this one sold this, and this one this: shoemakers and tailors. They fixed for the horses shoes. Blacksmiths. My father was in the wholesale grocery business. (Magda 1974)

More comfortable financially was Arlene Rubin's family. Both parents had received secular higher educations, which allowed them to become professionals.

> My father's drug store was in front of our house, and my mother had a shingle out. She had been a nurse in hospital for a long time, but when they came to Ekaterinoslav, she hung out a shingle. She was a midwife. She did vaccinations. People would come to her for advice. (Cohen 1981)

At the opposite end of the economic spectrum was Sam Davidoff's family.

> My father worked in a factory. There was one factory in town. They made blankets, and he worked in that factory. They would rent out a space or have a couple of machines put in. Quite a few of the people in the place would own their own machines. I imagine they would get paid according to how many blankets they turned out. When I was about six years old, I already went out to work. There were these people who had a large orchard. I'd stay in the orchard all night watching that nobody stole anything. (Magda 1975)

As the masses of Jewish workers grew poorer, in some areas of the Pale at the turn of the century it was estimated that as much as 30 percent to 35 percent of the Jewish population could be classified as *luftmenschen,* people who lived on air with no visible means of support, having no economic skills, doing whatever odd jobs they could find, and accepting Jewish charity from abroad (Gitelman 1988:78).

In contrast to the pervasive poverty, a few Jews earned enough to provide their families with luxuries that others could only dream about. Even so, most were not truly wealthy in terms of the Russian aristocracy nor could they achieve social mobility outside of the predominantly Jewish world. Nevertheless, a handful, who became well known through legend and song, prospered through their involvement in banking, railroads, sugar, oil, and water transport and did move in powerful circles well beyond those of ordinary people (Johnson 1987:363). As a group, however, Jews did not even consider the possibility of integrating into the upper socioeconomic levels of the Russian social structure.

Although many chose to follow the traditional path and to remain within an essentially Jewish world where educational opportunities were limited and economic production was being seriously curtailed, individuals had several alternatives in terms of broadening their economic bases. The first was to reduce their allegiance to traditional Judaism, if not to relinquish it completely, and to join any of the Jewish or secular movements that promised social, political, and economic reform. A second trend was for individuals to become private citizens who, although identified by others as Jews, did not participate in any of these groups. Both of these alternatives were frequently linked to a desire for new types of education and/or employment in the cities. The final and most drastic choice was emigration—an alternative based upon hearsay and wishful thinking—a complete severing of religious, social, educational, and economic behavioral patterns from those customary for Russian Jews. Although the choices were difficult, each with its own type of hardship and risk, by 1910 the population began to divide as millions selected one or another of these strategies.

War, Chaos, and Change

When the Great War began in 1914, many Jews found themselves involved as both citizens and as Jews with half a million displaced as refugees and another estimated half a million serving in the army (Gitelman 1988:81). Herschel Gottesman was one of those who fought for the Tsar.

> One thing the Tsarist government tried to do was induce hatred among the people: the Jews, the Christians. If they have the peasants fight against each other, they won't fight the guys on top. When we came the first time on the field to learn how to be a soldier, we were all standing in the line, two big lines, Jewish boys with the Christians. A general came up, said, "All Jews walk to the front." I walked out to the front, and he said, "Jews, I will bury you alive." From that moment I thought I was already a prisoner. They gave us rifles, bayonets. At the front, we went in the trenches: mud, dirt, blood. At that time life didn't have any value. Death at hand. So fighting it happened. One time they stopped a couple of hours to clean up the dead. We were in the trenches when we were given the order to put on the masks because the enemy let the gas. I put on my mask, and—just my luck—the mask cracked, and I didn't know where I was until I woke up in Moscow in the hospital. (Magda 1974)

As various armies moved across the battlefields of the Pale on the western border of the Russian Empire, the economy and social structure of the entire country broke down. In some regions Jews suffered through occupations by both Russian and German armies, while others were among those evacuated from the front in a move that shifted Jews into the Russian heartland and effectively eliminated the Pale. Meanwhile, as the war progressed, it became evident to many Jews that the disruptions of customary Jewish life were permanent (Roth 1989:363). Sam Davidoff was one of those who never returned to his home.

> When the Polish were coming in, there was a lot of trouble in the town. They'd grab people off the street and murder them. Later on the Germans came in, and we had it much easier. The Germans brought in some food for the people. One day you woke up, it was Russia, and the next day you woke up, it was Poland, and the next day you woke up, and it was Germany. In our town there was a makeshift airfield that the Germans put up. A fire started at the field, and it spread to an ammunition dump. We were all running, and bombs were exploding, shells were flying, windows were falling out of the buildings, and we all ran to the cemetery because the cemetery was on high ground. We had no housing after this fire. We took a little corner of the factory [where his father had worked] and we put up a two by four because the brick walls were left, but there was no roof. We built on a one room shanty, and we lived there for quite a while: six, nine months. Then we decided to leave. We went to another city, Pruzina, about fifty miles away. We stayed there for a couple of years, and then we started our trip to the United States. (Magda 1975)

Even though large numbers of the indigenous population of the region—Poles, Ukrainians, and ethnic Russians, among others—were equally affected by the devastation and carnage, they did not have the same history of deprivation and discrimination as did the Jews. Based on the Jewish collective memory of political repression, social ostracism, pogroms, educational and economic limitations, and religious intolerance, many Jews were unwilling to rebuild their lives in the Russian Empire without assurances that the opportunities would improve.

Revolution

The Jews suffered, as did the general population, through the mismanagement of both the domestic economy and of a war which most could not understand (Gitelman 1988:81). The loss of personal prestige for the Tsar and the concomitant disillusionment of the populace with the ability of his government to handle the crises, coupled with the anger generated by centuries of autocracy boiled over into the Revolution (Roth 1989:364–65). Despite the fear of many Jews that they would become the focus of peasant frustrations and violence, large numbers welcomed the Revolution, seeing in it the fulfillment of their hopes for equality, democracy, and justice, which had been dashed in the unsuccessful Revolution of 1905 and the ineffectual Dumas that followed. Myron Tsurkin describes this period.

> The year 1917 came and gave the hysterical world a terrific shaking, what with the world war destroying and devastating everything before it and the Russian Proletarian Revolution finally breaking forth in the most poverty-stricken and utterly beaten country. Chaos predominated in my mother country, and looking backward, I often wonder how I managed to live through this conflagration and tell my story.

Even so, Jews did not flock to the Communist Party where a disproportionate number of atheistic Jews were in the upper echelons and Leon Trotsky was second in command (Johnson 1987:450–53). Instead, many placed their main hope in Alexander F. Kerensky's short-lived provisional government, which had abolished the legal restrictions against the Jews as one of its first acts and promised freedom for both individuals and groups.

During this period immediately following the Revolution and the Russian withdrawal from the wider world war, an unprecedented development of Jewish community, cultural, political, and religious organizations took place. This brief period of promise lasted barely two years as the country plunged into a civil war with the Bolshevik Red Army fighting a variety of groups that wanted to restore the monarchy. Since the political structure of what was becoming the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had not yet stabilized, the civil disorder and economic turmoil prevented people from rebuilding their lives. The particular fear of the Jews—that anti-Semitic mob violence would resume—materialized with an estimated 1,200 pogroms in the Ukraine alone and probably as many more in all the other regions of Jewish settlement (Grayzel 1968:612). At the same time, General Anton I. Denikin of the White Russian Army set out to reunite the empire and to destroy the Jewish communities of the Ukraine (Roth 1987:365). Herschel Gottesman recalls the pogrom that convinced his family to leave.

> When Denikin came in, his followers started to kill everybody. They robbed everything. They came in the house. My mother begged them, "Please, we haven't got anything here." He hit her. Then, they took my brother-in-law's brother, and they made him dig a hole in the middle of the city and put him there, and they buried him alive and my uncles too. They killed whole families. Then, they grabbed me, and they took me to do the same thing too. I tell you, I believe there is a God because I survived. I started to dig my own grave. While I was doing that, one soldier was ready with the bullet. A Polish man ran toward this man. He used to do business with my father, and he knew me as a little kid. He begged them not to kill me. Later when I came to the door, everybody was crying something terrible because they thought I was dead already. (Magda 1974)

Emigration soared as the Jews, unwilling to take a chance on the new order and lured by the promise of the United States and other Western countries, chose to escape the restrictive past where an estimated 100,000 Jews had lost their lives in the chaos of the preceding years. This outflow that had resumed at the end of the war in Europe continued into the 1920s until the Soviets clamped down on emigration as they began to build the new Communist nation. Arlene Rubin remembers the journey to what many immigrants called *Die Goldene Medine:* The Golden Land.

> Everything was sold. Everything was packed. I remember my father and my mother got *kachunky,* dried fish, the taste of which I'll never forget. Good! Oh, heavenly! And great big goose eggs, hard boiled, and all kinds of good things to eat. One thing my mother didn't take with her were her clothes. All my toys were left behind, everything. We came with just a few things. At that time I was only nine and a half years old so I wasn't told too much, probably not to frighten me. The train ride was endless because we went through Poland; we went through Germany. When the train would stop, we still felt that we were going because of the constant motion. Finally we got to Holland, and that's where we boarded the ship, the *Rotterdam.* We knew we were going to Hartford, Connecticut, because my uncle lived there with his family.

Meanwhile, by 1922 in the United States, new immigration restriction laws had begun to reduce and eventually to deny admission to "undesirable" groups, including the Jews. By 1927 the population shift, which had begun in 1881, had all but ceased with 2,338,941 Jews having immigrated to the United States, most from Eastern Europe, primarily Russia (Wirth 1965:150). For the approximately half of the Jewish population that remained in the Soviet Union, the division between the Russian past and the Soviet future separated people from the old life almost as effectively as if they had emigrated. Even though some areas of the country were not affected as rapidly as others, the entire interlocking social and economic system changed under Communist political pressure, bringing in an era characterized for the Jews by Jewish community disorganization, modernization, and accommodation.

2

The Search for a Niche in the Soviet World

> The idea of the Revolution for poor people in the country was good. You could not imagine how poor the country was before the Revolution, especially for Jewish families because they were under the [discriminatory] laws and under the pressure more than anybody. They were eager to believe in the idea, to believe that everybody would have an equal opportunity.
>
> —Alla Rozina

New Incentives, New Constraints, and Anti-Semitism

With vast numbers of people physically relocated and all aspects of community life disrupted, most Jews were unable to return to traditional Jewish life even after the wider political conflicts began to resolve. As the shift toward Communism, collectivization, and industrialization brought about a fundamental division from the past, the promises made by the new Soviet system led many Jews to believe that the environment would finally be altered enough for them to take their places as equals. For those who had been moving toward modernization since the Enlightenment of the nineteenth century, the reality that they would have to pay for this privilege with some degree of assimilation was not totally alien. For others, the breakup of the Jewish religious and social system was devastating. Nonetheless, even those who would have chosen to reject change found that they were swept up by the new political and social movements and were being forced to select between alternatives that might be equally distasteful.

Two powerful social forces—pulling in opposite directions—have always affected the Jews in the Soviet system (cf. Bronfenbrenner 1970). First was the incentive to become the New Soviet Man, a theoretical construct that never came about, despite the value imbued in it by the system. Here individuals were encouraged to leave behind their old ethnic and religious identifications and to become "Soviets" with their primary allegiance directed toward the Communist order. Mark Sidur remembers those days.

> When I was a kid, one of the very important aspects of Communism was creating a new kind of human being, a Soviet Man. Your nationality,

> your roots did not matter at all. First of all, you were a citizen of a socialist state. Forget about your [religious or ethnic] feelings. It was a terrible fake, a fairy tale. When you are told five hundred thousand times a day you are an elephant, sometimes you start growing a trunk. So people believed that this was the future.

The second force was the isolating factor of anti-Semitism. Although there were periods when Jews found it relatively easy to move toward the mainstream, anti-Semitic campaigns and personal attacks inevitably reminded them of the boundaries they would never be allowed to cross, particularly if they wanted to retain some aspects of Jewish identity. Even those who voluntarily threw themselves into the task of building the new Soviet system and recreating themselves as "Soviets," were often disillusioned when they were rejected on the basis of the same "national origins" they were prepared to relinquish.

With the possibility of emigration eventually curtailed, Jews had little choice but to adapt to the reality of their situation. Not only had their Jewish world disintegrated, but the trend was for individuals to break away from any remaining community, to protect their interests by jettisoning ethnic behaviors that would have made them targets of the authorities, and to blend into the general populace. Cooperation and conformity became the keys to living within the new system.

The Consolidation of Communist Power

By the early 1920s Lenin had succeeded in pressuring various smaller political groups, such as the left wing of the Jewish Socialist Workers' Bund, into joining the Communist Party,[1] where they became more concerned with general issues than with those specifically Jewish. Already in place within the Communist Party structure were *Evektsii,* Jewish sections, which saw the continuation of Jewish values and institutions as constraints upon the Jews' ready acceptance of Marxism and the new society. In many cases, the *Evektsii* led the attacks upon Judaism as a religion and its educational system, Zionism as an expression of Jewish nationalism, and Hebrew as the language of both (Gitelman 1988:111). The *Evektsii* did, however, encourage the retention of the local Jewish welfare organizations because of the foreign financial assistance funneled through them by international Jewish agencies such as Organization Through Training (ORT) and the Joint Distribution Committee. This aid included extensive training for Jewish industrial workers and provided technical assistance and funds directly to new industries and collective farms (Pinkus 1988:95–96).

In addition, by the mid-1920s as part of the national economic restructuring of the country, the *Evektsii* took on the task of reforming the economic system of the Jewish *shtetlach,* which had formerly linked the rural peasants to the urban

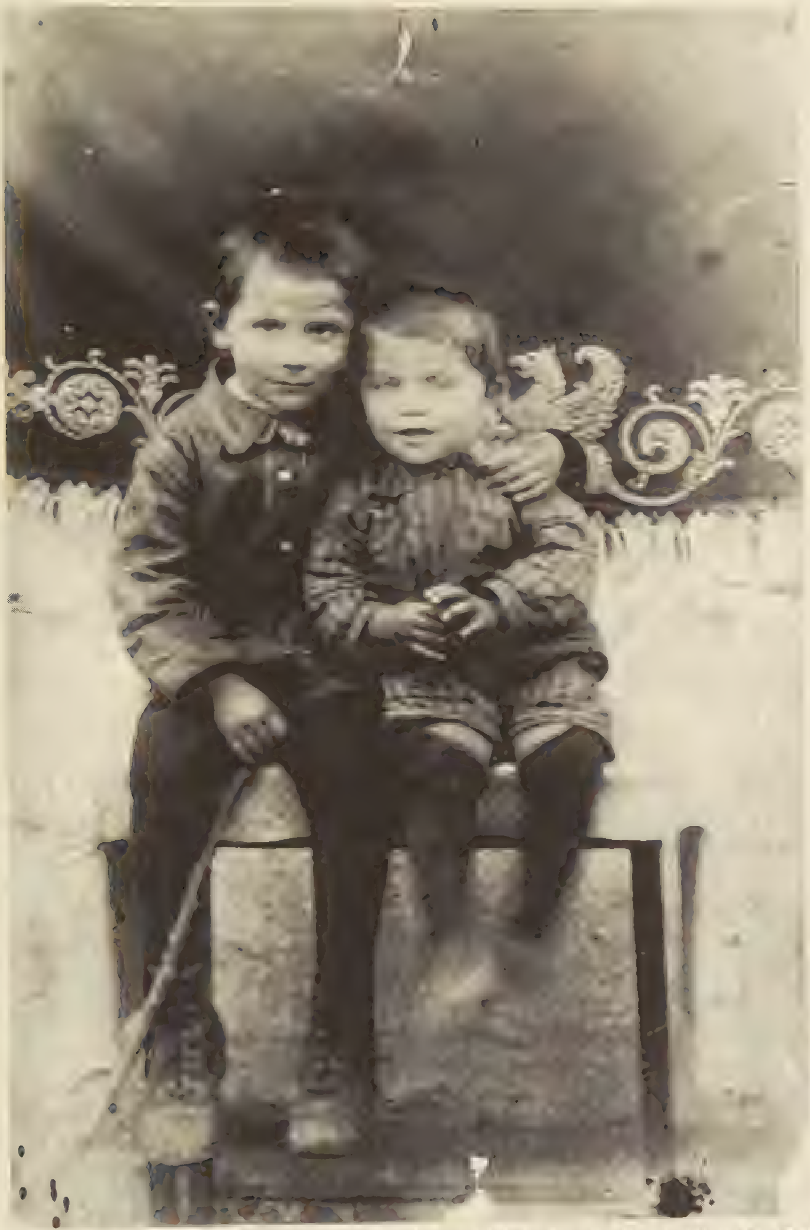


Figure 2. In 1931 three year old Boris Greydinger (right) who now lives in West Hartford and his brother Lieb (age 5) were photographed on the Eighth of March Collective Farm. Sponsored by the Joint Distribution Committee, this farm was designed to teach Jews to become "productive workers" on the land, a major Soviet goal. According to Boris, the collective farm was so successful that ethnic Ukrainians and Russians visited regularly to see this "true example of labor." In 1937 the Greydinger family returned to Chechelnik, their small town in the Vinnitsa region of the Ukraine where they were trapped in the local ghetto from 1941 to 1944. None of the Jewish farmers who had remained on the Eighth of March Collective Farm survived World War II.

markets. Devastated by years of military incursions, by the Communist prohibition upon trade as "speculation," and by the migration of many people of working age to newly industrializing areas, the *shtetlach* had lost their role as vibrant centers of Jewish life. With the rebuilding of agriculture as a national priority, making Jews into "productive" farmers seemed like a viable solution to the economic problems of the *shtetl.* Where to locate Jewish villagers was another problem. A partial solution was the development of Jewish agricultural collectives, a major Soviet ideal, frequently assisted by the international Jewish relief organizations (Grayzel 1968:658–59).

After Lenin's death in 1924, the jockeying for position within the Communist Party resulted in the consolidation of power under Joseph Stalin, who saw modernization through industrialization as a primary national goal. As government policies changed, hundreds of thousands of Jews migrated to cities and regions not previously open to them, initiating a trend which would transform Jewish population patterns, educational ambitions and attainments, and economic production in the Soviet Union. As many Jews abandoned the *shtetlach,* they also left behind the religious culture that had limited them in the Russian Empire.

In 1928, probably under Stalin's direct order, the Communists created an even more innovative strategy for dealing with Jews who did not fit neatly into the national plan. Birobidzhan was established as a Jewish settlement and in 1934 became the "Jewish Autonomous Republic" (Nedava 1972:214). Its founding was designed to solve several problems. It would become a place where Jewish paupers and "nonproductive" Jewish workers, forced to give up their intellectual professions and businesses, would learn to live on the land, and it would deflect the Zionists from agitating for emigration to the Middle East. That a large number of new settlers would provide a population buffer on the remote border with China was an additional benefit. In 1928 Mila Metlitskiy's (real name) older sister, a recent high school graduate, joined a group of Komsomols, Young Communist League members, who were enthusiastic about settling the Jewish region.

> At the beginning of 1931, my father and a large group of workers also decided to join the new territory. Many large families formed the group. No one knew what confronted them. Our family consisted of six people, our parents and four children. Although I was only six years old, I remember everything very distinctly. We rode the cattle train for forty-five days, so many families in the same compartment. At the stations the men ran and received soup and bread. At this time there was a famine in the country.
>
> We arrived at the beginning of March. The weather was very cold. All the women and children were crying. It was a small station where the trains usually didn't stop. The name of the station was [translated as] "Quiet." Afterwards the name was changed to Birobidzhan, and it became a big city. We all were taken to a large one-story shack with no private rooms. We all

> were allotted certain shelves for our use, and these we made private by hanging blankets. We were all different types of people: some were drunks; others played cards. We were all fighting different insects. This usually went on all night.
>
> We were surrounded by a large forest. All of the garbage from nearby prisons was brought here and dumped. When the weather got warmer, they started to build barracks for each family. The land was very swampy so it was very difficult to build. The houses started to settle when the land became colder. In the summer they sank lower. In time the families all started to build their own homes. They all had to clear the land before starting to build. In 1933 we built our own house and also planted a garden. We didn't see my sister often as she lived on the other side of a very rough water river, and the only way we could visit was by ferry or boat. The name of the river was Bira. Life was beginning to be easier.
>
> At the time of my schooling there were two schools, one Russian and one Jewish [with Yiddish language instruction]. I was able to complete ten years in the Jewish school. At the beginning of World War II, they closed the Jewish school.
>
> For the fifteen years that we lived there, we didn't see any fruit. Fruit trees couldn't be planted because of the short summer. Only wild berries grew. Our food was poor. The children stole pressed hulls from different seeds, and we also boiled different grasses. This was usually what we had to eat.
>
> The climate was very temperamental. In summer the days were very hot and short. In winter the nights were very cold and long. In the warm weather we were always fighting mosquitoes. The children were completely covered with the bites of the mosquitoes. In the summer due to infection the children suffered from diarrhea, mostly ending in death. Three children of my sister died due to the infections.
>
> The government [in Birobidzhan] at that time was Jewish, but in 1937 everything changed. The Russian government imprisoned all of the government workers, which included the doctors, teachers, and other professionals. The government after that became Russian. During the time of the war we had a large population [of refugees from the Japanese, coming] from China and Korea. The Jewish population decided to leave the territory. My sister and her family left for Minsk to live with her husband's family. In 1946 my family decided to go to Minsk too.

Few Jews went to Birobidzhan in the early years when people were fired with the zeal of building a new socialist country, and even fewer went later. Because of its isolated location, its poor climate, the lack of appropriate land for farming, its few resources, and the virtual failure of later attempts to establish industry, the Jewish population never exceeded 20 percent. In 1939, of the 109,000 people living in Birobidzhan, only 17,695 were Jews, and only one quarter of them lived on the land (Weinberg 1995:98). The Soviet government, however, continued to refer to it as a "Jewish territory," a fiction that affected Jews in several ways. Because Birobidzhan was the designated Jewish "homeland," Jews were never allotted a more viable location where they could truly build a community. Yet, the availability of Birobidzhan never swayed Zionists from their belief that the ultimate homeland—to which they probably would never be allowed to emigrate—was Palestine, eventually Israel, and discriminatory patterns remained as Jews continued to live as a fractionated minority within the republics of favored dominant majorities.

The Decimation of Religious Practice: Silence as a Strategy

The fundamental transformation of Russian society inaugurated by the Revolution and consolidated by approximately a quarter of a century of Stalin's dictatorship affected the Jews at every level of their existence and brought about a redefinition of Jewish ethnicity. Since ethnicity is always calculated in terms of the larger context in which the group lives, it is not surprising that the radical systemic changes instituted by the Communists altered all aspects of Jewish cultural life, Judaism as a religion, and the identity of the Jews themselves as members of the new Soviet society. While other nationalities—particularly those rooted in their traditional regions in the western republics, the former Pale of Settlement, where their languages and cultures were preserved—were also affected by their new position in the larger political-economic context, their social and educational institutions were not completely dismantled nor were their populations as a whole generally encouraged or, in some cases, forced to relocate.

In the earliest years of the Soviet Union, group boundaries were redrawn according to methods of economic production, and anti-Semitism receded temporarily as the chief marker of separation and discrimination. Nevertheless, after 1932 when all citizens received internal passports stating their national origins, Jews were again identified by an official label that was often used to discriminate against them in housing, education, and employment. Most Jews protected themselves by adopting the Soviet ideal and by dropping overt Jewish behavior for fear that observers including their own children—trained in the Soviet collective spirit—would ridicule their parents and/or report on their actions (cf. Gitelman 1988:167). It was difficult, indeed, for those who wanted to practice religion to do so. Some, however, ignored the government prohibition until serious reprisals forced them to limit Jewish behavior—renamed "family traditions"—to the privacy of their homes. Simon Lurie remembers his religious life during this period:

> We were not religious, absolutely not! First of all, the situation was not around. In the city of Kiev there was one synagogue. I didn't go to the

> synagogue; I worked. What we had was not religion, just tradition. Every holiday we were invited to my mother's, my father's house, and we celebrated together. When they passed away, we tried to continue the tradition, to buy matzo, but the dishes were the same, no kosher meat or anything. What kind of religion is that? If my boss or my leader knew [that I was religious], and if I made a mistake, he would say, "He goes to synagogue. He thinks about synagogue instead of the job." Maybe we were a little afraid because of the system. It was forbidden to be religious.

As part of the general trend toward social and political conformity, most Jews kept silent. This severing of what Halbwachs terms the "living bond of generations" (1980:63–68), the oral transmission of the cultural inventory, limited the children's access to the fund of knowledge about Judaism and reduced their awareness of the positive aspects of Jewish ethnic identity. Esther Smolor who was of the first generation born after the Revolution remembers the campaign against religion, the ridicule heaped on those who continued to believe, and her own attitude toward her grandmother's piety.

> Nobody believed in God. My grandmother was living in a small *shtetl.* She came sometimes to us, and she prayed. She was very old, and all my girl friends would say, "Stupid woman, she is not educated. Why did she not learn there is no God. She thinks the earth is flat! Oh, so stupid woman!" She did not dare to talk to me about God or religion! I looked at her like she was something ancient.

Education for the New Economy

As it became clear to everyone that Soviet hegemony was complete and that emigration was no longer an option, Jews began to wrestle with ethnicity in terms of the new political and economic alternatives. Even before the Revolution "modern" Jews had grappled with the ideological alternatives of the various languages in education. While the religious had continued to educate their children in the traditional Yiddish schools, those who wished to move beyond the confines of the old ways selected programs with other underlying philosophies. During the early Communist period when the Party adopted the policy of "the flowering of the nationalities" and the various ethnic groups were encouraged to develop their own national cultures within their own territories, this issue of language became salient again. As atheistic Jewish Communists pressed for the retention of Yiddish as the vehicle for educating Jews into the new socialist society, they instituted state-run Yiddish schools and encouraged the revitalization of publishing houses and other cultural institutions—all specifically devoid of religious content and designed to create a Jewish proletarian culture (Brym 1994:13). Even though this affected large numbers of people over the years, Yiddish education was defeated by two disparate groups. Religious Jews refused to send their children to Communist Yiddish schools where Judaism was singled out for denigration. In addition, just as in the past, those who wanted to prepare their children to leave what the new society termed the "backward" life of the *shtetl* believed that a Russian-language education was the key to economic success. By 1940 about 20 percent of Jewish children were still studying in Yiddish schools, but the end of the system was approaching (Korey 1973:30).

Although the Jews may have relinquished overt religious practice and attempted to conform to the new norms, they stood out from the mainstream population in their determination to take advantage of the new educational opportunities which, at that time, were widely available to them as members of the proletariat. Steeped in the tradition of learning, many were able to shift from religious to secular content without enormous cost in light of the incentive to use higher education and technical training as avenues for further integration into the emerging economy and social system. Esther Smolor's father earned a Ph.D. during this period and eventually became a professor of chemical engineering.

> My father was in the Red Army and participated in the Revolution. Being from a poor family, after the Revolution he was sent to university. Being Jewish helped him because so many people with education had left Russia, and there were not enough doctors, engineers, lawyers. Russian peasants who had the right to be educated did not like to be educated. All the universities were crowded with Jews because every Jew who was poor before the Revolution now had the right and was encouraged to go to the university. Jewish people love learning and became engineers or doctors because they didn't have *yeshivot* Talmudic schools.

Before the Revolution ethnic identification had limited Jews to all but a few occupations, among them those now classified as bourgeois—merchant or middleman—and those clustering around religion. After the Revolution these were no longer acceptable to the new order, which wanted to "normalize" Jewish economic strategies and integrate them into the Soviet system (Weinberg 1995:88–89). By 1925 an estimated 1,120,000 Jews had been forced to close their small businesses, compelling them to reconsider their economic options. While most Jews resisted becoming farmers in the new national push for increased agricultural production and almost all ignored the spurious promise of the new republic of Birobidzhan in the Far East, they were eager to participate in industrialization. With Stalin's first Five Year Plan (1928–1933) stressing rapid industrial development, Jews with a modicum of education and a little training could rise quickly through the proletarian ranks while those with higher levels of technical education could advance to levels few had aspired to before the revolution. By the late 1930s, it was estimated that more than 40 percent of the Jews previously residing in the Pale had migrated and changed their occupations. More than 364,000 had become professionals or semiprofessionals with more than two-thirds employed as technicians, teachers, artisans of various sorts, or engineers (Gitelman 1988:164–165).

Meanwhile, during Stalin's Great Purges of 1935 to 1939 the general populace, including the Jews, realized that survival often depended upon avoiding the attention of the government. Many Jews, however, were among the Party leaders, intellectuals, cultural figures, and ordinary citizens who were exiled or murdered. In 1937 Riva Mitkin's father, a singer and actor in Odessa, played to Yiddish-speaking audiences who enjoyed his portrayal of Tevye, the Dairyman, Sholom Aleichem's most popular character. By 1938 he was dead, a victim of the purge.

The terrors of this period paralyzed people, and many withdrew into trusted family and friendship networks. Children no longer attended religious schools. Synagogues—even if they remained open—were proscribed gathering places, and the Yiddish language was on the wane with what little remained of Jewish cultural life and ethnic community forced underground or destroyed outright. An entire generation, which was not being educated in Judaism except in the most superficial ways and had not experienced Jewish community life, was growing up under an established Communism. The trends toward Russification with Communism as the central ideology and secular education geared toward training for economic production had begun to replace Jewish lifeways. Although the new alternatives created the possibility of socioeconomic mobility and the expansion of links with mainstream society, the cost was often in terms of a rejection of the ethnic past. Still, many saw this break with Jewish tradition as a door into a democratic, egalitarian Soviet future and chose to position themselves for future mobility as well as to welcome the broader cultural world of European and Russian literature, music, and art. Nevertheless, anti-Semitism was never far from the surface, and Jews were frequently reminded that they would never be completely accepted.

The Great Patriotic War: The Decimation of the Jews

As it became clear to the Soviet government during the late 1930s that Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler had embarked upon an aggressive foreign policy that threatened both Europe and the Soviet Union, Stalin appeared to consider forming an anti-Fascist coalition with the West. In August 1939, however, he reversed his political direction, signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreements, a nonaggression pact with Germany. Among other provisions this pact required Jewish refugees from German-occupied Poland to return to that region or to accept Soviet citizenship and demanded that the Soviet Union refrain from publicizing German atrocities against the Jews. Germany ceded to the U.S.S.R. the right to claim Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bessarabia, Bukovina, and the eastern sector of Poland, adding almost two million Jews to the Soviet population. Although about 250,000

Jews from the war zone and a small number of Polish Jews were deported into central Russia where many survived and reintroduced the Soviet Jews to Yiddish, the Jewish religion, and Zionism, large numbers remained in their homes where they perished under the German onslaught (Gitelman 1988:177).

On June 22, 1941, the Wehrmacht began its sweep across the western republics, encountering fierce opposition from the Soviet armed forces. Nevertheless, the Germans overpowered the Red Army, breaking through its lines and forcing a retreat. Like most of their countrymen, the Jews were stunned by the attack, having believed that the Soviet military would deter an invasion (Altshuler 1995:181). In 1942 the Soviet Army blocked the German advance along a line roughly marked by Leningrad on the north to Stalingrad on the southeast. Moscow remained isolated but free. While many were drafted into the army, Vladimir Peskin[2] was one of the young Jewish soldiers who was proud of being a volunteer.

> I was a naval cadet at the Leningrad Naval School when World War II broke out. Near Leningrad, which was blockaded by the Germans, was an area called Ptatochek that was not occupied by the Germans. The Russian Army and Marines fought for four years to defend this area. Their efforts were successful. However, the death toll was high. I chose to serve as a Marine with a reconnaissance group in this area. Because of my war experiences, I knew about Germans killing Russian soldiers who were Jewish first. I was warned that this was a particularly dangerous choice. After six months I was severely wounded, leaving me too physically disabled to remain in the military service. (JHSGH-GHJCC 1996)

As a radio officer, responsible for military communications, Boris Polyakov received seven military awards during the four years he served in the army.

> In the summer of 1941 I luckily avoided capture by the German Army like a lot of soldiers on the Ukrainian Front. For three days my regiment was behind the lines attacking the Germans. In 1942 the retreat was a long way back to the Volga River and the battle of Stalingrad. It took my friends and me two more long years on the way to Berlin, to victory. I had a unique opportunity to be a witness at a historical event: the signing the German surrender on May 8, 1945. A group of officers, responsible for the radio connection with Moscow, was sent to Karlshafst near Berlin. In the big auditorium of a local military school everything was ready for the ceremony. The flags of the U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Great Britain, and France were hanging on the wall. Here I met fellow American officers to help make a radio connection with General Eisenhower in Paris. Very soon the auditorium was full of high ranking officers and the press. At 10 p.m. General Zhukov escorted General Keitel who represented Germany to the room.

> Then he was allowed to sit at the corner of big table with all the generals representing their countries. He slowly read the Act of Surrender and then in total silence he signed the papers. Everyone congratulated each other. The room was filled with joy as people celebrated their victory. (JHSGH-GHJJC 1996)

Meanwhile, more than one million Jews had been trapped in the region occupied by the Germans. Although the entire Soviet populace suffered under the occupation, the Jews were specific targets. Unlike many European Jews, those in the Soviet Union were not transported to the concentration camps but were incarcerated in local ghettos and/or murdered near their homes. Jennie Kovnor recalls those days.

> When the Nazis came, we went to Koretz to my mother and two brothers. The first action was May 21, 1941. They took 3,000 of our people outside of Koretz and made Russian POWs dig a ravine, and this is where our people were killed. Us, the younger ones, they left for work. Lazar worked in a quarry. This was the first operation the Nazis had. When they left us, they put us in a ghetto. We stayed in the ghetto from May till September in 1941. Before the High Holidays they were clearing up the ghetto, and they were taking us too. We were so far away from the concentration camps that it didn't pay for them to transport us so they liquidated us. When we saw them taking all people out of the ghetto, we ran away. I took the kid and Lazar, and we just ran with the stars we had to wear on the back. We ran into the country where my husband had a business and knew a lot of friendly Ukrainian people. He was a very good employer, and they all loved him. There was this one couple: she was Ukrainian, he was Polish, an old man—the Skolovskys [real name.] They let us in. During the summer we stayed in the attic, and then when it got cold, Lazar and the man of the house decided they were going to dig a ditch in the stall under the cows. They were going to give us food. They dug this ditch, and we went inside and put some straw in there. For a while it was okay.

Later, when the Skolovskys could no longer care for the Kovnors, Jennie and her son hid in the forest while Lazar joined the partisans. Another partisan was Abram Izikson.[3] Although still a teenager when he escaped from the Minsk Ghetto where all of his family except for his sister Polina had been murdered, he joined those fighting in the forest in December 1941.

> The partisans didn't take people without a weapon, but I managed to get one. I had a friend, Isaac. We got pistols and found out where to go. How we came to them, how they greeted us! It was horrible because they wanted to shoot us as German spies. Then I got into the company and saw

> my neighbor and the political director of the company, Simsl. "You don't have to worry now," he said. Now they won't shoot you." And I became a partisan.
>
> One time they sent us to set up an ambush. We were sitting at the edge of a forest. The Germans were supposed to be passing on a road. We knew that; our intelligence reported it. I was Stationary Machine Gunner Number 2. We lay down, and there was some sand on the ground. I put the ammunition down and lay down myself with my *ten,* that's a semi-automatic rifle, and the pistol was in my pocket. The Germans drew even with our machine gun and we opened fire. Others opened fire too. When I got out, I could see that no one was there. The Germans ran away. (Kaplan and Hoffman 1999)

Throughout the war killing squads, *Einsatzgruppen*—organized and sanctioned by the Germans—roamed the western republics, the Baltics, Rumania territory, and Poland. At Babi Yar near Kiev 30,000 Jews were murdered on September 29 and 30, 1941, by Germans and their ethnic collaborators. This was not the end of the killing at Babi Yar, however, with untold tens of thousands more Jews, Communists, Russians, and Ukrainians murdered at the site and buried in the ravine (Gitelman 1988:186–87).

Even so, many Jewish civilians survived. Some had been evacuated along with their non-Jewish neighbors, while others like Lena Krant's family fled as refugees.

> When the war began, my father was not drafted due to the condition of his health, but when the Germans began approaching Moscow, he was enlisted in the National Guard. Then in November of 1941, when the Germans were really close to Moscow, he asked for a leave from service, came back, and told us that we had to evacuate because the Germans were already near, and if they entered Moscow, they would kill all the Jews. We already knew they were killing Jews in Germany, and we knew about how they were killing Jews in the occupied territories. Father made sure that we got on a freight train car and we evacuated to Kazan, where the family of my aunt who had evacuated from Belarus was living. That was the last time we ever saw our father because he was killed in 1943 outside Yelnya on the Western Front in North Kalinin. He left us three children.
>
> We evacuated in a freight car without water, without toilets. We got to Kazan in about a week and settled in with my aunt in one small room: there were eight of us there. The room was around fifteen meters. We had to get our bread ration cards for food, and we started looking for work. I was 17; my brother was 13. The little one was one and half years old. My brother and I went looking for work. A plant that made explosives for the Katyushas military vehicles equipped with rocket launchers had evacuated

> from Leningrad to Kazan at that time, and we got jobs at that plant. My brother went to work at the lathe, and I was assigned to the assembly shop where we put together the explosives. We worked fifteen, sixteen, eighteen hours a day. Sometimes we wouldn't leave the plant for weeks. Once, when I left home, it was warm and I was wearing sandals, and by the time I returned home, it was snowing. There were a lot of children working. We had to load up boxes of explosives that weighed fifty to sixty kilograms. This was very difficult labor. We got bread cards for this. Since we almost never left the plant, we would receive 400 grams of bread and would eat it on the spot. They also gave us some liquid soup of water and flour and maybe a potato when we were working. All in all, we had it real tough. We lived in a semi-hungry condition. And so I worked there until May of 1944. We managed to get out of Kazan, and we returned to Moscow since our apartment was available and no one occupied it. (Kaplan and Hoffman 1999)

Although the dangers of war created privations and shortages for the entire population, the Jews suffered disproportionately. Continually reminded of their special status as alien ethnics by both the German atrocities and by the anti-Semitism within the Soviet system, many were determined to survive and to prove themselves through service to their homeland. Exclusive of military deaths, an estimated one to 1.3 million Jews died during the war, and the survivors were aware that nationalist anti-Semites had contributed to this toll (Dawidowicz 1976:541). As monuments and memorials to the dead were erected, the Jews as a group were particularly excluded. In addition, jokes deriding the Jews as participants in the war began to circulate despite the fact that an estimated 500,000 had been in the military, a very high percentage of people of an appropriate age, and of these about 200,000 had died in combat. 160,000 military honors of various sorts—including at least one hundred Heroes of the Soviet Union, the highest military award—were issued to Jews, and additional Jews were known to have been soldiers in the Czechoslovakian and Polish armies (Gitelman 1988:197–98). Nevertheless, anti-Semitism remained entrenched in the Red Army ideology, and many Jewish soldiers believed that they had to perform twice as well as their comrades to achieve the same level of official recognition.

Discrimination at Home, Support for Israel Abroad

After the War, the U.S.S.R. plunged into rebuilding the country. Times were hard for everyone, with shortages in all areas and people struggling to pull their lives back together. The Jews who had been evacuated or otherwise displaced often found it difficult to return to their homes. Many found that former neighbors were hostile for a variety of reasons, including intrinsic anti-Semitism and the fear that the returning Jews would retaliate for their active participation with the Germans, their passive acquiescence with German policies, and/or their expropriation of Jewish property (Lagedan 195:190; Simon 1997:49). Abram Izikson, the feisty young partisan, was confronted with this problem when he returned home to Minsk.

> I couldn't find my family when I returned home. We had our own little house, and there was a KGB Lieutenant living in the house. I was a little drunk, had a weapon on me. I was just on vacation from the army. I came in and asked, "Who is the master of the house here?" He said, "I am, why?" As soon as he said "I am," I felt a little twinge in my heart. I took out my pistol and addressed him. "Jump out of the window, Master, you scoundrel." And he jumped out of the window. His wife started climbing too, trying to jump out, but she was pregnant. I said, "You can stay here. I'm not going to rape you. Don't worry." I went outside and told him, "Now come in through the door." He came in. I said, "The master here is me, not you. This is my house, not yours, and I give you twenty-four hours, so there wouldn't be a trace of you here then. Get out of the house." He said, "I can't. I have to report to my bosses." "Fine, report to them."
>
> I went to a Military Prosecutor, a General. He was this good old guy. He listened to me, immediately called the KGB and told them to vacate the house. I told them that I had a wife, [which was a lie]. They didn't check documents or anything. I went back to my house and said, "Listen, there is an order from your boss. Your boss wants to see you." A Lieutenant-Colonel was there; he gave us a very good reception. Well, it was the KGB after all; they know how to talk well, and he asked me for a two-week postponement on vacating the house. He got his two weeks, and he got out of my house. (Kaplan and Hoffman 1999)

Even though Jennie and Lazar Kovnor returned to Koretz, although not to their own home, after liberation they soon decided to emigrate.

> We decided one day it was time to leave, and we left because we were afraid the Iron Curtain was going to come down and we wouldn't be able to move. It was like a dream. Everybody was pulling up west, and then when we came deeper in Poland they told us there was a camp for displaced persons. Then the kid got sick with scarlet fever on the way. We stayed in Poland three weeks; it was during the Kielce pogrom with the Polish, and we slept on the floor because they were shooting through the windows. Finally, we arrived in Germany, and there was a DP camp.

That a few Soviet Jews like the Kovnor family might slip through the cracks in the border was evidently of less interest to Stalin than the possibility of resolving a refugee situation that could conceivably become a drain on Soviet resources. In February, 1945, Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill agreed that refugees from Eastern

Europe and Poland as well as from those areas of Germany and Austria occupied by the Western powers should be allowed to migrate to whichever countries would take them and that Palestine should be given to the Jews as a national home (Pinkus 1988:164).

Despite Stalin's apparent agreement to support international programs benefiting Jewish refugees, within the Soviet Union waves of anti-Semitism continued to plague the Jews. By 1946 "the campaign against the nationalities" had begun to focus on various authors and journalists who were perceived as promoting their own individual ethnic groups over the Communist state. Although other nationalities were harassed at various times during this period, Jews were singled out for using the word *Jew* or employing Jewish expressions too frequently, for referring to Biblical themes, for writing about the murder of Jews during the war, and for promoting Zionism (Pinkus 1988:148). Anti-Semitic articles appeared in newspapers and in magazines and libeled people who had little recourse. Charged with the political crime of slanderously accusing the U.S.S.R. of anti-Semitism, espionage for the West, or "rootless cosmopolitanism," which implied a lack of patriotism and connection to the motherland, Jewish artists and writers were arrested, sent to labor camps, executed, or simply disappeared. Vladimir Peskin who had been critically wounded during his wartime service as a Marine was one of these.

> My childhood dream was to learn English and be a translator. However, as a translator for a famous magazine for high level Navy officers and as a Jew, I was a target for the KGB. In 1948 I was arrested as an "American spy" and sent to the infamous Gulag in Siberia until I was released in 1956. (JHSGH-GHJCC 1996)

In 1947, in contrast to the anti-Semitism at home, Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko spoke before a special session of the United Nations General Assembly about the plight of the Jews and later that year advocated the partition of Palestine (Gitleman 1988:240). Not only did the Soviet Union vote for the creation of Israel, but it also permitted Czechoslovakia to sell much needed arms to the new state (Schectman 1968:149). Although this inconsistency puzzled observers and Stalin never spelled out his reasons for the partition vote, he probably saw the establishment of Israel as the easiest way to drive the British out of the Middle East and to assure a socialist ally in that region (Johnson 1987:525). Most Soviet Jews, ever aware of the need for self-preservation and conformity, did not express positive feelings publicly about Israel, but many—at all levels of Russification—were secretly pleased. Said Yevgeny Katzman:

> Of course it was a big thing to know that Israel does exist. We were happy when Israel was made a state. It was a very nice feeling, but there was no way to think about this for our family. We were so worn out after World

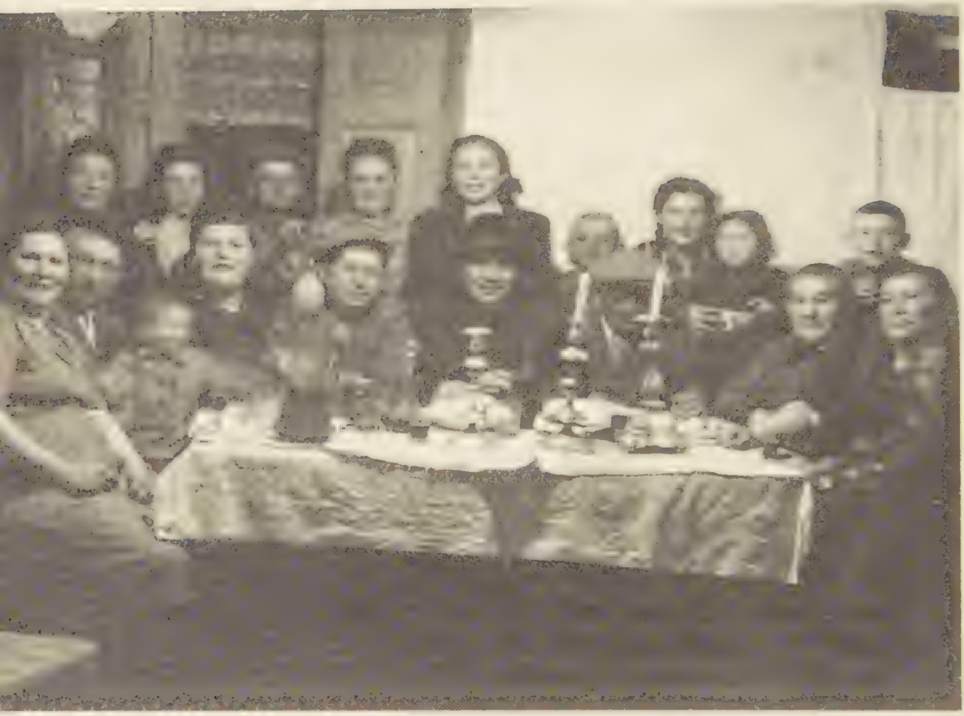


Figure 3. Despite the general movement of Jews toward conformity with Soviet expectations and the ear of reprisals against Jews practicing their religion, in 1950, Maryam Sandal who now lives in West Hartford (standing fourth from the left) and her husband Nachman (to the left) were among the uests at the Fleisher family's seder in Chudnov in the Zhitomir district of the Ukraine. Nachman's unt and uncle (the elderly couple seated to the right) and their children had survived the war in Uzbekistan. Somehow they had managed to save a number of important Jewish ritual objects ncluding the large silver candlesticks, a tallis, and tefillin. Not only was the round matzo behind the andlesticks difficult to obtain, but the family could have been punished severely had the authorities nown they were conducting an illegal seder.

> War II; it was tragic—hard times. Maybe we weren't strong enough. It was a long time from the Revolution in 1917 to 1948, and the Communists tried to kill inside the people everything individual, everything that was attached to our religion.

The juxtaposition of Soviet support for Israel abroad and the openness of the anti-Semitism at home illustrated for the Jews once again that they could not trust their government to deal with them fairly and consistently as citizens in the same category as those of other nationalities. Many believed that it was foolhardy to transmit the little Jewish cultural information they had retained to their children who, in any case, had little positive incentive for holding onto Jewish beliefs or behaviors in light of government opposition. With the traditional religious material purged from the ethnic inventory, "Jew" was becoming an increasingly empty construct with potential for disaster. Ascribed ethnic identification had again become a serious problem for Jews whether or not they would have chosen "Jew" as their primary identification marker.

Nevertheless, the establishment of Israel as an acknowledged Jewish homeland has reverberated through the following decades for many Soviet Jews. The simple awareness that Jews form a valid ethnic entity with political power in their own land has made them less of an anomaly on the world scene and more congruent with the Soviet system where nationalities are linked to specific territories. Several years later, however, when the Soviet Union turned against Israel in support of its Arab clients, anti-Zionism became equated with anti-Semitism, and the Jews found that Israel had become a major focus for discrimination against them.

Stalin's Final Terror

By the early 1950s many Jewish students were routinely denied admission to higher education and those Jews who graduated were discriminated against by being assigned to the worst jobs in the most remote parts of the country. Esther Smolor believes her choice of a career was dictated by anti-Semitism.

> I wanted to be a movie producer, but I failed the exam,[4] so I went to engineering school, and I graduated in 1952. It had been no problem in the beginning of this period, but during the years that I was learning it was worse, worse, and worse, and by 1952 no Jewish people could attend college without special protection or some connections. When you graduate from the university, everybody must work at least a year. You were assigned to a job, and of course, in this year, 1952, the worst assignments were for Jewish people. They were in very hard areas, but, I was not just lucky. I planned it! I was already married, and I was eight months pregnant. A woman who is

> pregnant has a good time! So, I sat in Kiev with my family. Later in the 1960s after Stalin's death, I was working in the Institute of Building Construction, and I had some inventions, and there I met an influential old Bolshevik. He said to me, "Why didn't you study for a Ph.D.?" I told him because I was Jewish, and he said, "No problem, I will help you." He helped me, and I was graduated with a Ph.D. in Structural Design.

The few remaining Jewish cultural figures were attacked, and a number of highly publicized trials, held in various parts of the country, focused on "economic crimes" (including theft, bribery, "speculation" [trade or business activities of any sort], fraud, and refusal to work) which had strong political overtones. Although people of various nationalities were accused of economic crimes, Jews were singled out as specific targets. In 1953 the Moscow "Doctors' Plot" in which a group of doctors including six Jews were accused of a variety of treasonous acts, of conspiring with the Joint Distribution Committee (which was itself accused of being a front for American intelligence), and of plotting the murder of high-ranking Soviet officials began to unfold (Pinkus 1988:177–78; Etinger 1995:103–24). Although Leonid Silber's stepmother was not one of those on trial, she could not avoid its poison.

> My stepmother was a Communist, and she was a doctor in World War II and very famous in town. She was in all kinds of Communist meetings, and she was very proud but a victim of the Doctors' Plot. She was the chief of her clinic, and she lost her job. She never got it back. She raised me believing Communism was better, even for a Jew. She suffered from being Jewish, but she would never directly say this.

Rumors circulated that barracks were being prepared for mass deportations, and many Jews believed that primitive Birobidzhan, which had few resources to support a large new population, would be their destination. The specter of pogroms and the possibility of a new genocide terrified those whose collective memory had prepared them for the worst (cf. Rothchild 1988:97). Ina Eyot was a teenager in Moscow at that time.

> I was afraid to go outside. I was afraid to go to school. All Jewish people suffered. It was a very, very bad time. What was good about it was that it did not last long. It was just a couple of months before Stalin died. All the stories about railroad trains and taking all the Jews possibly to Birobidzhan, we heard that.

At the height of the terror on March 5, 1953, Stalin suddenly died. While some Jews were jubilant and saw it as a miracle, others were afraid that conditions would worsen and that the campaign against them would be continued by his successor. The collective memory, which developed among the Jews during this period as a result of Stalin's actions, became the benchmark for measuring further anti-Semitism (Rapoport 1990). In addition, it formed the basis for the new fear of and disbelief in the Soviet system that flourished after the 1967 Six Day War and served as an impelling force toward emigration for those who no longer believed that they could live as Jews of any sort under the Soviet system.

The Post-Stalin Era

Within a few weeks of Stalin's death Nikita Khrushchev's new government announced that the "Doctors' Plot" had been an error and that those arrested would be released. Under Khrushchev the general fear abated, and the secret police moderated their behavior, but Yiddish culture was essentially moribund. Although some Jews who had been caught up in Stalin's last action had died, others were "rehabilitated" and allowed to return to their private lives. In addition, Jewish students were again admitted to institutions of higher education. Even as the atmosphere lightened, some Jews continued to worry that the respite from violent anti-Semitism was only temporary, while the more optimistic hoped that this was the beginning of a new era. According to Alla Rozina:

> When Stalin died, there were of course, some changes. It was zero freedom in those times and when it started to be 10 percent, we thought this was real freedom. We didn't know what this was: how to eat it, how to use it. We thought this was freedom, but it wasn't.

By 1956, diplomatic relations between Israel and the U.S.S.R. had begun to deteriorate as Khrushchev supported Gamal Abdul Nasser's expropriation of the Suez Canal and his military stance against Britain, France, and Israel. Khrushchev also accused Israel of becoming a tool of Western imperialism and began to apply a concomitant pressure to the Jews at home.

In contrast, a year later in 1957, two positive events heightened Jewish consciousness in the U.S.S.R. An Israeli delegation attending an International Youth Festival in Moscow drew an enormous number of Jews who wanted to make personal contact with the delegates. When the group traveled to other parts of the country, equally enthusiastic Jewish crowds thronged to support them. Leonid Silber remembers this delegation.

> We didn't know too much about Israelis. Everything was banned. I remember in 1957 the first student festival was in Moscow, and the Israel delegation traveled from Kiev to Moscow. Somehow, I don't know how, but a lot of people came to see this group. A lot of Jews put on flags and ribbons, and the Russian government couldn't do anything. This was the first time

> Russian Jews could see Israelis. Propaganda showed Israelis with big noses, but nobody knew what Israelis looked like.

That same year, some Soviet Jews who had formerly been Polish citizens were permitted to return to that country. Although approximately 30,000 were "repatriated" to Poland, most moved on as soon as possible to the West, particularly to Israel. This trickle of emigration revived the hope that others would be allowed to leave as well.

At the same time, a small number of Zionists who had been living in the Soviet-occupied Baltics and Moldavia (carved out of parts of Rumania and the Ukraine) applied to emigrate. This area, along with Eastern Poland, annexed at the beginning of World War II, had brought an additional 1.8 to 2 million Jews with a collective memory of Jewish religion and community under Soviet jurisdiction. Unlike nominal Jews in other parts of the U.S.S.R. whose collective memory centered on the Communist world, many of these Jews spoke Yiddish at home, had had Jewish educations, and were able to convey both religious and cultural customs to their children. As late as 1945, for example, Jewish children were still being educated in the two Jewish schools remaining in Chernovsky, formerly part of Rumania, until their closure soon after the war (Pinkus 1988:194, 310; Rothchild 1985:243). During the early years of this emigration from 1956 to 1958, not only had the Jewish Agency paid the Soviet government to release some Jews but it had also provided transportation and resettlement assistance to the refugees in Israel (Sanders 1988:95). Generally unaware of this, Soviet Jews as a group did not believe that Soviet policy would ever allow free emigration. There was a clear dichotomy between the professed policy that Jews who wanted to be reunited with their families abroad were able to do so and the actuality. Although this inconsistency created international embarrassment for the U.S.S.R., the Soviet government did little to alleviate the situation (Korey 1973:192).

Despite a general antireligious campaign in the late 1950s and another series of "economic trials" against "parasites," many with Jewish names in the early 1960s, life was easier than it had been under Stalin. The Jews were divided among themselves on how they perceived their treatment. The most optimistic thought that things were going well; a second group believed that although conditions were improving, there were still no safeguards against terror and anti-Semitism. Yet another group felt alienated from society, while still others began to think seriously about a variety of alternatives which ranged from attempting to assimilate completely to emigration (Gitelman 1988:246). The main trend, however, was to wait quietly for the political-social context to change.

In 1965 Alexei Kosygin, then chairman of the Council of Ministers, opened the doors to emigration when he briefly mentioned in a speech that he saw no barriers if the few discontented Jews in the U.S.S.R. wanted to leave. A number, mostly Zionists from Latvia and Lithuania, immediately applied for visas. 1,444 (of whom 891 went to Israel) received them in 1965 in contrast to 536 the previous year, Khrushchev's final year in power. The following year, when 1,892 received exit permits, increasing numbers of Soviet Jews began to consider emigration as a possible strategy. In 1966 Kosygin, then Premier, announced that Jews would be permitted to rejoin their families abroad (Pinkus 1988:253).

The Six Day War

Meanwhile, a 1966 coup by the new Ba'ath party in Syria instituted a shift in Soviet-Arab relationships and brought about a situation that would culminate in the Six Day War in June of 1967 (cf. Sachar 1990:774–78). Although the Israeli victory over the Soviet Union's Arab allies evoked anti-Semitism in its guise of anti-Zionism, it also gave rise to a new cognizance of the meaning of "Jew" as more than a limiting label on the fifth line of the internal passports. According to Dina Alexander, this new concept of Jews defeating Soviet interests was invigorating.

> The '67 war had much effect on the Jews. First of all, they took pride in being Jewish, and Israel became more important. Not even the Russians used to believe the propaganda! I remember hearing a conversation between two Russian drunks who said, "Those Arabs, they don't even know how to fight!" They'd say to the Jews: "Look, you've got three million against a hundred million, and you're winning!"

Even the most assimilated, such as Zoya Kramer whose identification with Jews had always been remote and intellectual, were affected by the Six Day War.

> I think the Six Day War was very important for Jews in the Soviet Union, and was a turning point in their self-determination. I think prior to that, one thing Jews did believe about themselves was that they could not fight. They were proud of famous Jews, but there were a lot of rude Russian jokes about Jews in World War II and their cowardice, and the Jews somewhat believed it. The victory in Israel was a tremendous uplift to their spirit. It was the first time that they believed they were something else, a people, not just as individuals, not just a lot of famous names, but a people.

As Jews began to reassess the value inherent in their "nationality," increasing numbers began to draw a positive personal self-awareness from the group identity—no matter how limited—and to explore with other Jews new possibilities which might be opening to them (cf. Sharansky 1988). Although some became religious as they learned about traditional beliefs and behaviors, for the most part, these explorations were of a secular intellectual nature and led to a positive ethnic identity rather than to religious observance. Illegal books of Jewish interest, many laboriously copied by hand or retyped into *samizdat* form, began to circulate clandestinely, and people began to assert that national Jewish concerns had an authenticity previously unacknowledged in the Soviet system. Even though most Jews did not unite—particularly with strangers—or begin to change their behavior in substantial ways, many began to consider new alternatives in terms of this renewed awareness.

The Soviet government, which had harbored an interest in promoting some sort of pro-Soviet Arab union since the 1950s, was not pleased with the Israeli victory nor with the rising Jewish consciousness and retaliated both abroad and at home. This included severing diplomatic relations with Israel, supplying military and economic aid, materiel, and advisors to Arab countries, and reducing the already limited Jewish emigration quotas. In addition, the Soviet Union fostered both international and domestic propaganda campaigns against Israel, focusing on a redefinition of Zionism as Nazi-style racism (Pinkus 1988:253–57). Despite its clear lack of logic, this particular canard took flight and became a popular rallying call within the United Nations and among those nations and political groups that leaned toward socialist philosophy or felt that their own national or ethnic interests were being threatened by Israeli and Jewish successes. In the U.S.S.R. individual Jews were forced to "speak out" against Zionism, and various others were accused of spying or of being saboteurs. There was little that the relatively uninformed, unorganized, politically powerless Jews could do to ameliorate the situation other than to protect themselves as individuals by remaining silent.

The general goal of government policy seemed to be to turn the Jews away from Israel and thoughts of emigration. By and large this strategy was successful for a short time except with the most political of activists. Those who were considering emigration, yet were less committed, were often daunted by the negative propaganda and by the threat that they would be held with no recourse in the repressive U.S.S.R.

Beyond Silence: Moving toward a Positive Jewish Ethnicity

By the end of this period, the all-encompassing religion-oriented community of many pre-Revolutionary Jews had been irretrievably eradicated and replaced by personal friendship networks, urban industrial life in new locations, and a will to flourish in the secular world. For the majority of Jews, there was no contact with formal Jewish institutions of any sort, and they had integrated into Soviet society in ways, that would have been inconceivable before 1917. Not only did Jews participate in the Soviet educational system, but they frequently achieved a high level of socioeconomic mobility despite the institutionalized anti-Semitism. For many, the only remaining semblances of Jewish practice had been reinterpreted in terms of "family tradition" and "nationality" and were often specifically divorced from their Jewish content. Jewish values such as education, which had previously centered on prayer, rabbinical studies, and the exegesis of ancient texts, had been diverted into their secular expressions and now focused on occupational and professional training. Although Jewish values remained to some degree, remnants of religious behavior had become increasingly fragmented and symbolic.

The Jews had recreated themselves as generally accomplished, successful, cultured secular citizens. The transformation from the "Russian Jews" of their parents' and grandparents' generations was virtually complete as they distanced themselves from what many had perceived as the "authentic" religious behavior of earlier times, frequently incorporating the Soviet stance toward religion as "superstition" and archaic behavior into their Soviet Jewish identities. For most, "Jewishness" did not center around a set of religious beliefs and practices but was an attitude, a filter for interpreting the world around them. While their ethnicity might elicit negative responses from the "other," many Jews retaliated among themselves by making jokes about the stupidity and drunkenness or the primitive behavior of other nationalities. Nevertheless, they recognized the reality of the distance between themselves as individuals without community in a Soviet world that valued the national identification and coherence of the more privileged "other." Conditioned by half a century of reticence, most Jews were fearful of selecting new behaviors that would emphasize their ethnicity and might put them at a disadvantage in society.

Even so, by the end of the 1960s for some Soviet Jews, Jewish consciousness began to change again as hope for a new life abroad became remotely possible. Jewish sensibilities had been heightened by the Israelis' stunning victory in the Six Day War, and a number of individuals began to rally around their Jewish ethnicity on two levels: in terms of personal self-organization and/or as a positive group identity. The majority of Jews, however, were unwilling to do anything that would draw attention to themselves in any way. This, then, was the situation immediately after the 1967 war, before the demand for emigration began.

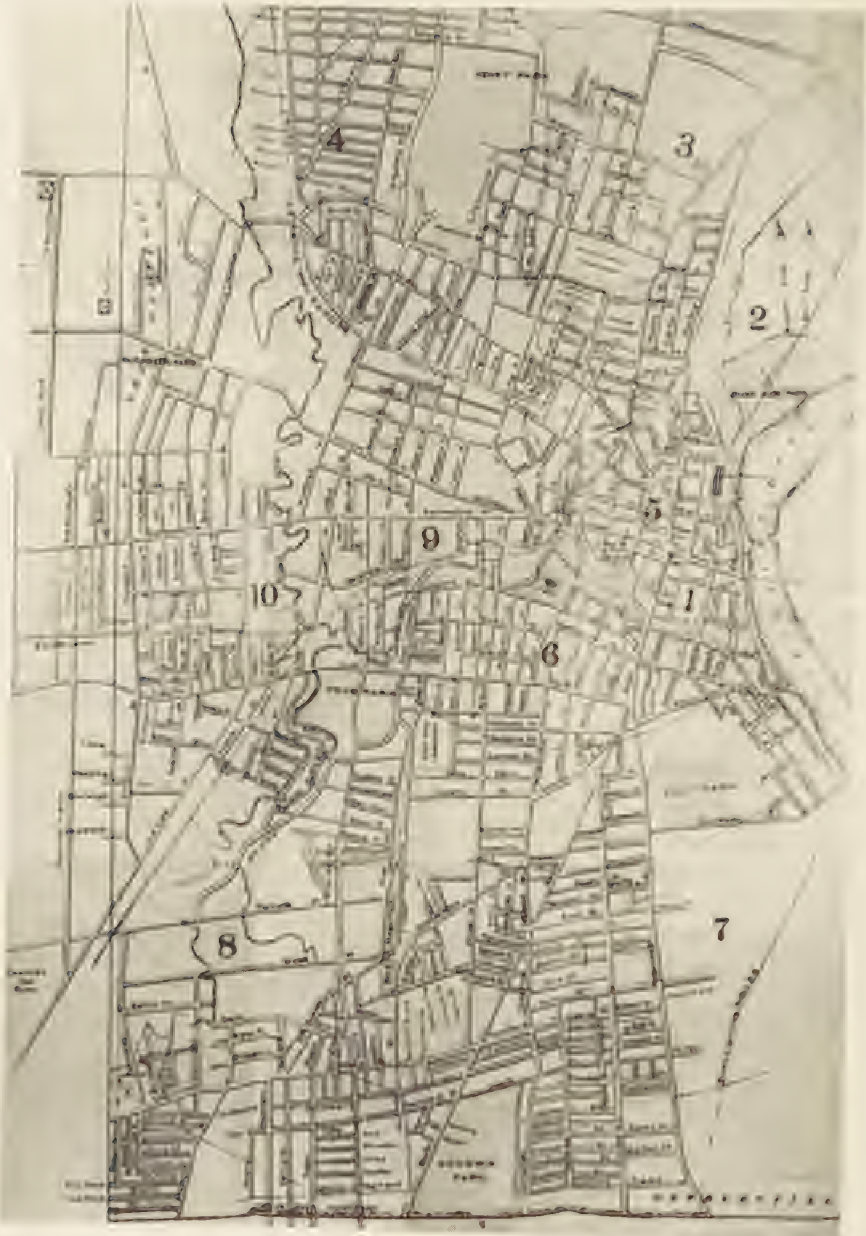


Figure 4. The immigrant East Side, numbered 1 and 5 on this 1914 map, was almost completely demolished by urban renewal in the 1960s. After 1920 the Russian and other Eastern European Jews flowed into the area of second settlement, north of Asylum Avenue, and then continued to the northwest corner of the city along Blue Hills Avenue, west of Keney Park. The wealthiest of the established German Jewish families, however, moved to the West End, near the Farmington Avenue-Prospect Avenue axis and in the early 1930s constructed a new building for Congregation Beth Israel on Farmington Avenue, two blocks west of the Hartford city line. (Elihu Greer's Sons' New Map of Hartford from the 1914 City Directory, courtesy of the Connecticut Historical Society of Hartford, Connecticut.)

3

Die Goldene Medine: The Golden Land

> I have become a citizen, have pledged allegiance to this country, and I intend to live up to every oath which I have taken and for which some day I may be called upon to uphold.
>
> —Benjamin Cohen

Hartford: The Challenge of the New World

In contrast to the approximately 2,500 years of Jewish settlement in Russia, the history of Europeans in general and Jews in particular in Connecticut has been relatively short. The first English settlement near what is now Hartford was founded in 1636 by the Reverend Thomas Hooker and a group of Congregationalists from Cambridge, Massachusetts (Grant and Grant 1986:9). Although this group was interested in Biblical Hebrews and the concepts of justice, freedom, and the importance of law, they were not interested in contemporary Jews as voting members of their communities. For more than 150 years Congregationalist leaders controlled the political structure of Connecticut, and Puritan values dominated society, continuing to exert great influence even after Connecticut's population had become more diverse (Roth 1979:112). Although other Christian churches were permitted in Connecticut after the disestablishment of the Congregational Church in 1818, Jews were not officially allowed the same privilege until 1843. Nonetheless, references to Jews began to appear in public documents as early as 1659 (Marcus 1969:54).

The first permanent group[1] of approximately two hundred Jews had settled in Hartford by the 1840s, a period of rapid industrial growth. Coming primarily from Germany, they were part of a large group that had migrated under pressure of political instability, land scarcity, poverty, and government restrictions on many aspects of life (Sachar 1992:51–52). The first Jewish neighborhood was in the downtown area of Front, State, and Windsor Streets near the Connecticut River docks. During the early years, the language of the synagogue and the closely knit Jewish organizations was German, but it was soon supplemented and later replaced by English. Within a few years of their arrival, the Jews hired a cantor and ritual slaughterer, founded men's and women's fraternal and self-help organizations, and started a synagogue with a rabbi and a religious school.

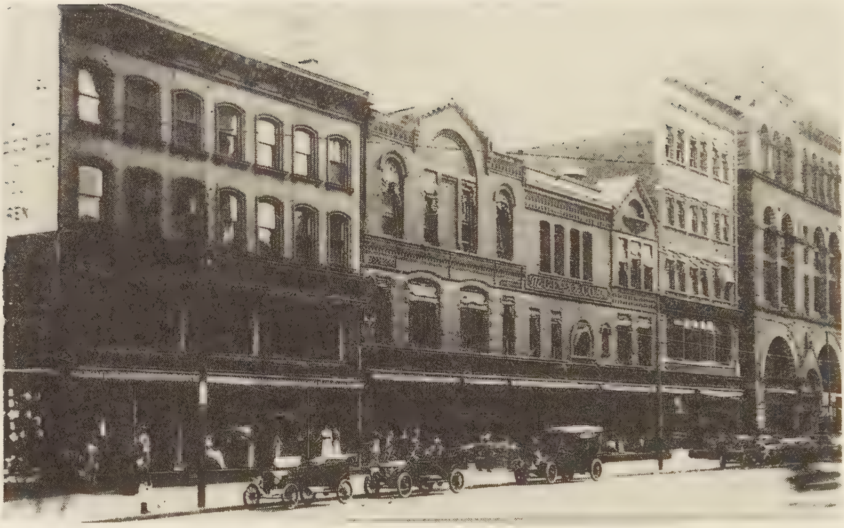


Figure 5. Founded in 1841 as a small dry goods store by German Jewish immigrants, G. Fox and Company became a large well-known New England department store chain. This photograph was taken before the 1917 fire that destroyed the building. After the fire, the Fox family decided to conduct business from the warehouse and a number of small rented shops as they rebuilt on the Main Street site. Even though there was no way for the Foxes to track money owed to the store, customers voluntarily came forward to pay their bills.

While some of the immigrants brought business expertise from Germany, others brought skills that enabled them to find jobs. By 1851, fifty members of Beth Israel Synagogue owned businesses while other newcomers had found non-Jewish partners for such diverse enterprises as auctioning and the manufacture of hats and spectacles. Many worked as peddlers, butchers, clerks, Hebrew teachers, proprietors of boarding houses, and horse dealers, moving rapidly into Hartford's civic, business, and cultural life (Silverman 1970:27). In the 1860s two Jews were elected to the city council from their local wards, and at least six Jewish men served in the Civil War. During the following two decades as the population of Hartford increased to more than 50,000, the Jewish community grew to about 1,500 (of the 250,000 Jews nationwide) (Silverman 1970:30).

Yiddishkeit *in Hartford: The Immigrant Neighborhood*

For every immigrant the trauma of relocation precipitated a personal break with what had been the "authentic" Jewish life of the old country and set in motion the process of reevaluation and recreation of ethnic identity. With nothing as it had been in Europe, the modes of thought, types of behavior, and standard relationships that had characterized daily life frequently needed to be altered or jettisoned entirely. Although the Jewish newcomers believed that they would begin anew as "Americans," both their previous experience and the American context when their particular cohort arrived during the fifty-year immigration period affected the way they approached the American system and their integration into it.

Most of those who came to Hartford from Russia believed implicitly that they would never have been accepted as equal citizens had they remained in their homeland and that even a revolution with an innovative social and/or political philosophy would not alter the anti-Semitism of the masses. Unwilling to continue within the same context, they saw emigration as the only strategy for improving their lives and America as *die goldene medine* where their Jewishness would not be a constraint (cf. Sklare 1971:18–19). Nevertheless, the ways in which they perceived the promise of the Golden Land varied.[2] Some migrated to enhance their economic production, others came for education, for freedom of religious or political expression, or to give the children a future not limited by the familiar stereotypes. On the other hand, a minority, whose families had persuaded them to migrate, would have preferred to remain at home, while another small group saw America as a refuge only until the revolution when they would be able to return as full members of the new society. Overall, however, the Jews did not look back. America was their future, and they intended to become "real" Americans.

Well established by the time the first Russian Jews arrived in the early 1880s, the German Jews who set the standards for "Jewishness" in Hartford were consternated by the influx of what many perceived as a homogeneous mass of impoverished, poorly educated, religious zealots (cf. Manners 1972; Sachar 1992). Contrary to this common belief, however, enormous variety existed among the immigrants who came from a number of locales and represented all shades of the Eastern European Jewish spectrum. Despite the differences in previous experience between the two groups and the diversity within any new immigrant group itself, according to Benkin and DeSantis (1982:244), the established group is crucial to how the new group responds during the resettlement process and their eventual expression of group life. Nevertheless, since it is impossible for any group to incorporate another group's experience and collective memory in toto, a culture gap is inevitable. Sid Abrams, the American-born son of immigrants from Russia, was always aware of the contrast between the two groups (cf. Dalin and Rosenbaum 1997:71–72).

> The German Jews had come here earlier, and they were considerably more affluent. They became the benefactors, as it were. They were able to help the less able Jews. But at the same time, they looked down upon those riff-raff whose education had only been limited to what they could study in Hebrew and Yiddish.

Myrna Jacobs, who was born in Hartford and grew up on Governor Street in a Yiddish-speaking household, was well aware of the German Jews and their attitudes.

> For quite a while the German Jews acted as if they were superior. The German Jews were already Americanized, and here were the Russian Jews with these awful manners. Our ways were completely different from their ways, and we were probably much more active in all kinds of things: in our synagogues, in the Workman's Circle [a socialist group], and so many more. Because there were [very few German Jews] what happened was that we overcame them in numbers.

Between 1880 and 1920 more than 90 percent of the Jews migrating from Russia entered the United States (Simon 1997:3). By 1910, of the 6,500 Jews living in Hartford, 80 percent came from Eastern Europe and Russia, substantially outnumbering their German Jewish predecessors (Dalin and Rosenbaum 1997:48). In that same year, it is estimated that 70 percent of Connecticut's population as a whole, and one third of those living in Hartford, were first- or second-generation immigrants (Lewis and Harmon 1986:61).

In the immigrant neighborhoods ethnicity was redefined and community constructed despite conflicts among ideologies and accents. As individuals came together in the tenements, the workplaces, the schools, and in the religious and cultural organizations, these interactions generated new relationships and institutions, leading to increased flexibility and accommodation, modernization and Americanization. In some cases, the dislocation of immigration disheartened newcomers and limited their ability to recreate themselves in the new context (cf. Handlin 1973). Most, however, adapted.

As most of Hartford's new immigrants poured into the cheap apartments in the East End near the schools, kosher shops, and synagogues, the majority of the German Jews and the Irish who had preceded them moved out. The neighborhood was lively with Yiddish and a variety of other languages spoken by the various immigrant groups who settled near each other (cf. Dalin and Rosenbaum 1997:51). Despite their proximity, each group focused on its own institutions, social networks, and particular relationships with the multifaceted America. Ida Block, whose family began its American life in an apartment behind her father's grocery on Windsor Street, remembers the polyglot neighborhoods of her childhood.

> We were living in back of the store. It was very difficult for everybody. I don't remember ever seeing any rich people. We sat home all winter with one stove with five rooms, and we were all cold. We moved to where they were not too many Jews. They were mostly Irish, Italian, Polish, a mixture of everything. It was really a melting pot, but we learned to get along. If somebody would want to beat us up after school, my brother would hold my hand, and we'd run like anything. The Italian kids used to wait around the alleys, throw a couple of stones, and call us names. But the children played together. If you leave them alone and don't instruct them the wrong way, they'll be good too. (Cohen 1983)

Eventually, the Blocks returned to the dense Jewish neighborhood where they would find Yiddish-speaking neighbors and the goods and services they needed. This strategy of preferring to live among other Jews near Jewish institutions and stores set the pattern for community life throughout the century. Although some families have always chosen to live in non-Jewish neighborhoods, it was not until much later in the century that Jews began to move to remote suburbs where they formed a tiny minority and where there were few, if any, specific services for them. From the beginning it was clear that the availability of housing and other material resources for Jews was not limited by their ethnicity as had been the case in Russia but by their status as immigrants—which they would not pass on to their children—and upon their own potential for economic productivity.

Adapting to the Hartford Political System

In Hartford the Russian Jews formed three political categories. First were those who continued to be involved in the politics of Russia, primarily in terms of

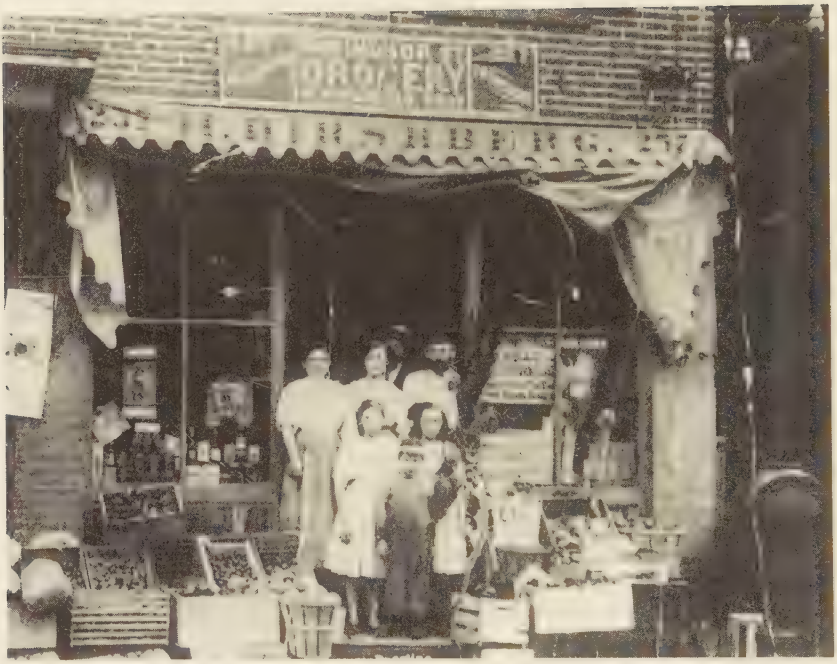

GROCERY
HERSHBERG

Figure 6. In 1910 members of the Hershberg family were photographed in front of the their grocery store on Windsor Street in the heart of the immigrant neighborhood.

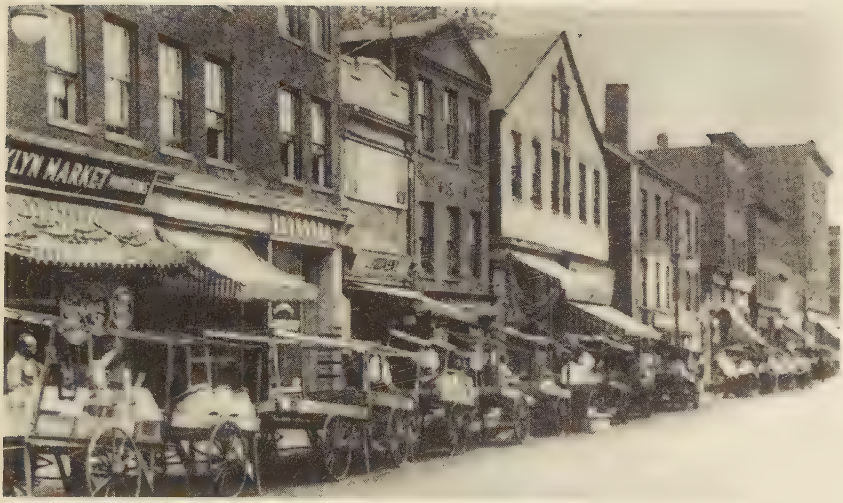


Figure 7. Despite the presence of large stores such as G. Fox, many immigrant merchants conducted their small businesses from pushcarts such as these on Front Street on the East Side about 1920.

waiting for the revolution or joining socialist labor groups. The second group was comprised of many who may have retained a socialist orientation yet wanted to become citizens and part of the American system. The third group was apolitical, choosing to focus on their personal lives in America without reference to the political if it did not touch them directly. In addition, there were the Zionists, who may or may not have been involved with the politics of Hartford but were determined to work for a future Jewish homeland.

In the first category was Arlene Rubin's social revolutionary father who never unpacked his suitcase even though he lived in Hartford for the rest of his life because he planned to return for the revolution. Sonya Gersten who had taken part in the abortive Revolution of 1905 also remained interested in Russian politics, but she refocused her political activity because she would never return to Russia. She says, "When I came to this country, I was still full of the revolutionist ideas. I belonged to the Labor Lyceum—a socialist organization but not Zionist—because I was still full of the things I lived through and saw (Cohen 1968)."

In contrast, Isaac Waldman exemplified the second trend, divorcing himself from old-world politics. He viewed emigration as a complete break with a country that had never accepted Jews as full citizens and had discriminated against him personally.

> I belong to many organizations including political, fraternal, professional, and cultural. There are many native Americans in these organizations with whom I mix freely and feel quite at home. I do not belong to any organizations which aim at arousing interest in the affairs of my native land. The only contact I have maintained with my native land is through correspondence with my relatives. Otherwise, I have no interest in my ex-country's affairs. I am better off now economically, physically, and in every way possible. Never will I regret coming to this country. (Tonken 1938)

As part of this second and much wider trend, many Hartford Jews became citizens as soon as they were eligible. One of the first women to vote in the immigrant community was Ida Block who had campaigned for women's suffrage.

> The first time I went to vote, I'll remember it as long as I live. I voted at the corner of Mather Street and Windsor Avenue. My husband watched the baby, and I went to vote first. The men started whistling at the women, and they said, "Go home and wash your petticoats." That didn't bother me one bit. I went, and I voted the same as I would today. I wasn't nervous. I came out, and he said, "*Tacka mazel tov*" and he kissed me. I said, "Now you go and do the same thing." We were so happy. (Cohen 1983)

Although many in the early years were socialists, transferring their Russian Jewish values and experience to the American political scene (cf. Dalin and Rosenbaum 1997:31–32), this did not affect their desire to become good American citizens. Once it became clear that socialism per se would not take root in Hartford and that the Democrats embodied some of the socialist ideals—particularly later in the 1930s when Franklin D. Roosevelt became president—ethnicity and Democratic politics seemed to go hand in hand. Many Jews assessed the Democratic Party, with its anti-big-business, working-class ethos, as being the most beneficial to themselves as individuals, as workers, and as an ethnic interest group. The Blocks joined the Democrats as did most of their friends. Said Ida Block: "They were mostly Democrats, mostly working people. They used to talk together. They used to read the papers, and they used to say, 'Around the Republicans, they like the money, and they hold it tight'" (Cohen 1983).

Nonetheless, a few became Republicans, and, over the course of the twentieth century, members of both parties served in local, state, and federal political offices. Although the Eastern European Jewish entrance into formal politics in Hartford began in 1903 with the election of Herman P. Kopplemann from the immigrant district to city council, Jews never became as involved politically as did their Irish predecessors (Silverman 1970:206; Zaiman 1990:11–12).

From the beginning there had always been some Jews who focused completely on creating new lives for themselves in Hartford without community or political involvements. Daily life was already difficult, and many found more than enough to occupy their time without interesting themselves in partisan politics or in utopian schemes for a homeland in the Middle East or Africa. On the other hand, however, were the Hartford Zionists who were actively working for a Jewish State. In 1898, the year after the first Jewish Congress convened in Switzerland, they founded the B'nai Sons of Zion Society, which was followed by other Zionist organizations serving different facets of society. Among them were boys' and girls' clubs, labor organizations, and charitable groups. Michael Singer expressed the Zionist ideal.

> I feel that a Jew should perpetuate his culture, and the only way that this can possibly be accomplished is by having a country of their own. No matter to what extent a Jew becomes assimilated, he will always be a Jew and will be discriminated against. I hope that the future generation (I leave myself out of this because of my advanced age) will have a country where they may thrive and perpetuate their own custom, habits, and manners. (Tonken 1938)

With Hartford as part of the Zionist lecture circuit, the high point of Zionist public expression during this period came in May of 1922 (Connecticut Hebrew Record[3] 1921:3). Chaim Weizmann[4] who would become the first president of Israel in 1948, physicist Albert Einstein, and Schmarya Levin, a former member of the Russian Duma, headed a delegation that rallied the Hartford Jewish community to raise $100,000 for development of Palestine. The public ceremony and parade celebrating this visit symbolized three critical new aspects of Jewish life in Hartford. First was the realization by Jews that they were as free as any other group in America to express issues of ethnic importance publicly without fear of government or mob retaliation. Second was the issue itself: that Jews felt comfortable enough in a time and place where many, if not most, of the adults were immigrants to campaign—again publicly—for what many believed was the right of every ethnic group to its own sovereign territory. The third aspect was that of the publicly acknowledged alteration in intergroup relationships. That mainstream Hartford—churches, both Protestant and Catholic; the municipality, represented by political dignitaries and motorcycle police as part of the parade; and the economic sphere with stores and banks decorated for the occasion—recognized that the Jews' particular concerns were valid aspects of Hartford community life, gave enormous legitimacy to personal and communal Jewish identity. Nevertheless, for the majority of Hartford Jews, however Zionistic, Palestine would never be home. Like Michael Singer who had emigrated once and had no intention of doing so again, they loved America and were grateful for the opportunity to construct new lives free of active anti-Semitism. Despite their belief in the need for a Jewish homeland and their willingness to contribute financially, Hartford's Jews overwhelmingly considered themselves Americans, a trend that has continued throughout the twentieth century.

Religious Practice: The Defining Ethnic Marker

Overall, Russian Jews were far less cosmopolitan and Westernized than those who had come from Germany, and they tended to be much more traditional in religious observance than their predecessors. This is not surprising given that the Enlightenment had begun considerably earlier in Germany and that the German Jews as a group had been more amenable to what they perceived as modernization and an increased positive connection with the mainstream. Since the Russian Jews were moving into an established German Jewish community, they were expected to adapt to the former's expectations and folkways as well as to those of non-Jewish Americans. This difference between the groups was particularly evident in language—between German and Yiddish—and in religious practice. The discomfort worked both ways with the German Jews embarrassed by the burgeoning population of seemingly primitive traditionalists settling in Hartford and with the Russian Jews unable to understand the modernized religion of their predecessors.

In truth, the degree of orthodoxy among the latter was exaggerated, with the majority of the most orthodox remaining in Eastern Europe because of the pressure placed upon them by rabbinical warnings against Godless America (Hertzberg 1989:158). Because the leaders of the *yeshivot* and other Jewish influential religious institutions did not emigrate, their particular forms of observance, education, and control over the general Jewish population did not take root in America. Without the guidance of the elite, immigrant orthodoxy in Hartford was in the hands of rabbis and lay leaders whose influence was rarely felt beyond those who chose to affiliate with their particular institutions.

In 1884, the Eastern European Jews opened their first synagogue in Hartford, the orthodox Association of Brothers, Children of Israel (Adas Israel), and in 1893 the first rabbi from Russia, Isaac S. Hurewitz, arrived (Silverman 1970:12).[5] By 1920, 12 more orthodox congregations, based on the congregants' customs in their home countries, had been formed by groups from Poland, Lithuania, Rumania, Austria, and the various regions of Russia. Sid Abrams recalls this social pattern.

> These people organized synagogues according to their *landsleit* that came from the old country. They were almost a clublike atmosphere because each group that came from each township formed a group here and worshiped together.

While many attended the orthodox synagogues, they did not necessarily do so with the same regularity as in the past. Although Michael Singer continued to lead a traditional Jewish life, he acknowledged the changes taking place.

> Both my wife and I are very religious and we try our best to live up to the traditions and customs which were prevalent in the old country. It is my duty to provide for the family, and it is her duty to take care of our home and children. She keeps kosher, lights candles on Fridays, and leads a life as closely as possible to the life which was hers in the old country. We go to the synagogue regularly and are happy to be able to do so without fear of a pogrom. We observe all the Jewish holidays in the best Jewish manner. When my children were young, I tried my best to make them adhere to my principles, but as they grew older, I realized that they have their own lives to live in a more modern world, and, therefore, they should live as they best see fit. I don't know whether or not this is the right attitude to take, but I can honestly say that it has accomplished the thing which I prize very highly, peace in the family; however, it seems to me that Jews are slowly losing their so-called Jewishness here. (Tonken 1938)

It is clear that no group, including the Jews, was able to transfer all aspects of its intertwined ethnicity and religion to America and that each was forced to relinquish or transform various practices, beliefs, or symbols into forms more suited to the altered context. How one viewed the inevitable change—as negative attenuation, as positive progress, or simply as a neutral transformation—depended on where one stood in relation to the religious tradition and ethnicity. At the same time that ethnic religious group solidarity served as a bulwark against personal and group alienation, it, nevertheless, became a means of adapting to the new context while allowing the practitioners to retain a sense of continuity and identity (cf. Smith 1978:1183; Stout 1975). In Hartford, many of the orthodox groups changed and merged over time, eventually moving out of the downtown area as the composition of the immigrant neighborhoods altered. In 1919 the first Conservative synagogue, B'nai Israel—later renamed Emanuel Synagogue—was founded by former Russian Jews, marking the beginning of the salient trend toward modernization and less rigorous religious practice (cf. Sklare 1971:112–13).

Meanwhile, a second trend, which had begun in Russia after the onset of the Enlightenment, continued as many Jews eagerly moved into secular society on a variety of levels. Although they may have decided to ignore many of the restrictive aspects of Judaism, many maintained their ties to the ethnic community, while at the same time expanding their social and cultural horizons by joining literary groups or attending concerts and plays that did not necessarily have specific Jewish content. Even as Isaac Waldman threw himself into the cultural life of his new land, he reflected on the place of Jews in America and of role of Judaism in his life.

> I certainly have a desire to see the perpetuation of my nationality and its culture here but only to the extent where it would not interfere with the American culture. I believe that the Jewish culture should be subordinate to that of the American. Both can live side by side very easily without causing any friction. There is no reason why a culture, which might enable one to have a broader and far reaching knowledge, should be lost. All Jews should have their children taught the history and language of the Hebrew race. I am a good American and a good Jew. (Tonken 1938)

While the decisions to move beyond the strict boundaries of religion and to participate in the cultural life of the city were voluntary, those decisions centering around economic survival often were not. For many the conflict between religion and economic necessity focused on the choice between working on Saturday and maintaining a commandment that had defined community life in Russia. Despite his awareness of the difficult choices demanded by the new system, Michael Singer was not at all sympathetic to those who succumbed to economic pressures and modified their traditional religious observance.

> Pasty-faced and undernourished, the Jews worked from morning until night. They forgot their religion and appeared satisfied with the rut into which they had fallen. They went so far as to even smoke and work on Saturday. This shocked me. I detested these so-called reformed Jews and still do. I took my first job without any objections because I did not have to work on Saturdays. The only leisure time that I had was on Saturday which I spent in the synagogue. (Tonken 1938)

As some held tenaciously to tradition despite economic hardship, others complied with employers' demands or kept their businesses open to avoid losing trade, making a critical symbolic change. Although the decision to work on Saturday began as a personal economic one, it escalated into a major new behavioral strategy that affected the entire practice of religion for many. It also paved the way for the acceptance of less rigorous observance and the abandonment of many of the customary Jewish cultural and religious behaviors that had inhibited interactions with the outside world. Benjamin Cohen observed these changes.

> At first I could not get used to the idea of not going to the synagogue on Fridays and Saturdays or working on Saturdays. I had never done so in Russia nor had I ever seen any other Jew do this. But after a while, I became used to the idea of working on holidays and attending synagogue services once a year or maybe a little oftener. I was recompensed for giving up these old Jewish customs by the feeling of security and safety which pervaded my whole being. I realized that there were plenty people killed here every year by automobiles, trains, gangsters, etc., but one felt secure in the thought that he was free from religious persecution, invasion by foreign bandits, and pogroms. I could readily appreciate why my countrymen were so anxious to become Americanized and forget their old world customs which they usually associated with trouble, banditry, and slaughter. (Tonken 1938)

Some Jews, like Arlene Rubin's revolutionary family, who had never kept kosher in Ekaterinoslav, also rejected religious practice in Hartford, adapting to America without any interest in recreating Russian Jewish life. The extreme expression of this trend was manifested by those who saw becoming American as synonymous with the shedding of every aspect of old-world language, religion, and custom and identifying completely with the dominant society. Most Jews, however, did not view this as the ideal but as a rejection of an identity that they valued.

The large numbers of Jews coming from Russia before immigration restriction brought with them a strong collective memory of community and the underlying religion, which governed all phases of their lives. Jewish socialists and radicals, influenced by Jewish ethics—with or without their religious expression—banded together for the common good and expressed an enduring faith in justice, freedom, and human rights. In addition, even those "modern" Jews who had rejected religious practice and immersed themselves in contemporary Russian culture and politics had almost always had traditional parents or grandparents who spoke Yiddish and reminded them of their origins. The existence of overt anti-Semitism reminded every Jew—no matter how observant or secular—precisely where he or she stood in relation to the rest of the population. This, however, was not the case in Hartford where Jews interacted with various ethnic groups—some of which had had little or no previous experience with Jews—and with the established Americans in new configurations. Although anti-Semitism existed, it did not shape Jewish identity in the same way it had in Russia.

Since the immigrants, even the most traditional, were probably more innovative and flexible than those who had stayed behind, many were open to new aspects of the ethnic and religious life in Hartford. As the religious, intellectual, and secular strategies that had been set in motion by the Enlightenment continued to expand in the new environment, the stringency of religious practice and the number of those observing the all-encompassing practices of *Yiddishkeit* dwindled. Clearly the trend was toward less rigorous observance and the growth of the Conservative (an Americanization of the orthodoxy they had brought from Russia) and Reform (which they adopted from the German Jews) movements which seemed more suited—for many—to the new American reality. Although most Jews retained great parts of their ethnic heritage, they found that they could not transmit intact to their American children the religious and cultural practices—the *Yiddishkeit*—which had molded their lives in Russia. In many cases, they did not even wish to do so.

Kinship and Social Structure

Roles within the Jewish immigrant family in America began to change as soon as the families encountered the new conditions. In some cases men immigrating alone set up housekeeping for themselves in small rented rooms or lived with families as boarders, necessitating a recreating of family behavior patterns. Sonya Gersten was one of the housewives who welcomed the single men for the extra cash they provided. "We lived on Portland Street, and in four rooms I had three boarders. They paid me three dollars a week with suppers, and I had to wash their clothes" (Cohen 1972).

Ben Cohen created a new family when he married the daughter of the family where he boarded.

> My home life is comparatively happy and well managed. I married a girl who had also come from across and whose culture and religious backgrounds were very much akin to mine. We are intelligent and broadminded enough to do away with old world customs such as the woman must stay at home and work and have very little to do in the political and social life or have certain established privileges and duties assigned to husband and wife. We lead our own free lives in the best matrimonial manner. We each know our so-called duties without actually defining them. Of course, we feel that our duty is to our children. With this main point of agreement, there is very little conflict between us. As for the children themselves, I find that they lack discipline. They have too much freedom in the streets (not that I do not believe in freedom for a child), and they acquire habits which are detri-

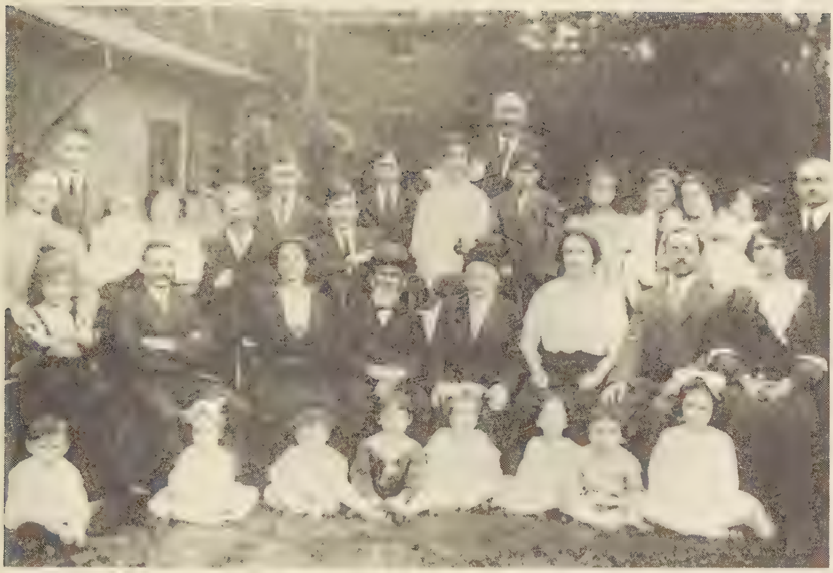


Figure 8. This photograph of the Sherry (originally Sheresherky) family was taken in June 1914 at the family home on Bellevue Street. Various family members of this large Russian Jewish family owned stores and businesses in Hartford and the outlying towns. One couple immigrated to Israel, and other family members were active in the Socialist Party in Hartford. The young girl fifth from the right in the back row is Emma Cohen. A founder of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford, Emma Cohen conducted several of the interviews used in chapters 3 and 4 to document the history of the Hartford Jewish Community. Her own oral history and other interview transcripts served as important resources for this period.

mental to their ability to respect and obey their parents and elders. I love my children, and they love me. Outside of conflicts arising because of their not obeying me at certain times, nothing is radically wrong, and we all understand each other. (Tonken 1938)

Although Michael Singer had believed that he would be reunited with his family soon after leaving Russia alone, reality forced him to construct an interim life.

> I managed to save enough money to enable me to send for my family and to establish my wife and children in a home furnished from top to bottom after being separated for seven years. They had undergone many hardships during the pogroms and the terrible conditions in general which exist during a war. They came here and found a haven free from persecution and race hatred. The long absence of my wife and children did not change our feelings or our mode of living. We began where we had left off, and life began anew for us. (Tonken 1938)

Despite Michael Singer's belief that nothing had changed between him and his family during their separation, it is unlikely that family interactions remained the same, given the new context. Not only had Michael become accustomed to living without them, but the children had matured, and his wife had managed alone through the Great War and the ensuing chaos. That they were able to pick up the threads of their lives and reunite illustrates the depth of their family commitment. In contrast, the New York Yiddish-language newspaper, the *Forverts,* frequently reported on the problem of wives whose husbands had abandoned them in Europe or rejected them when they finally arrived in America (Sachar 1992:148).

Beyond the individual family, those accustomed to a cohesive Jewish environment and the religious ethic of community service participated in a variety of ways. Motivated by this ethnic ideal, Sonya Gersten's mother collected money for community charities and distributed food and other items to people in need.

> She used to start to collect on Tuesday—bread, challah, meat, chicken—all kinds of merchandise. Then Thursday she used to say to my son, "Take the street car, come on and we'll ride. You'll come on the third floor. I can't go steps. Just throw the package and run away. Knock on the door and run away. Don't stay, and don't tell anything about who it was." That was her job for years and years. She used to pack packages on her shoulder. But she said they shouldn't mention her name, never, and nobody knew. She started the Old People's Home on Wooster Street [the precursor of the current Hebrew Home and Hospital]. Everything that she did they shouldn't mention her name, not to write anything, not to put her name in any place. Nobody knows, but she was the first one. (Cohen 1968)

Among the institutions that developed during this period was the *Chevre Kadishe* [Burial Society] founded in 1906 by a group from Wolkowysk, Russia (Silverman 170:15). Later it followed the same pattern as some of the synagogues, merging with other groups and moving to a nearby suburb. Other institutions included the old-age home, an orphans' home, religious schools, a free loan association, the Hartford Hebrew Association with its social clubs and classes, the secular Yiddish-speaking Workmen's Circle Education Alliance, and more than forty-seven cemeteries. These latter were tied to synagogues, workers' organizations, and *landsmanchaften*—societies founded by those coming from the same place in Europe—and illustrate the diversity within what appeared to outsiders to be a homogeneous Jewish immigrant unit. Ida Block's father gave her advice about participating in several of these organizations: "My father used to say, 'You must become a citizen. That's the first thing, and you must belong to a shul, and you must belong to a lodge because if you need a cemetery, what are they going to do with you? You've got to belong to an *oxy*' [informal loan fund]" (Cohen 1983).

Over time, the *oxy* system flourished and became the model for modern credit unions. Within a few years more than thirty small organizations had sprung up to provide help for the needy (Silverman 1970:31–34) and a social structure for the organizers. Although these organizations were independent of those established previously by the German Jews,[6] the necessity for providing aid for both those suffering in Hartford and in Europe gradually brought the German and Russian Jews together in new groups, forcing them to communicate in English, frequently their only common language. Chief among these was the United Jewish Charities, founded in 1912. Three years later in 1915, the Young Men's/Women's Hebrew Association (YMHA-YWHA) also provided a neutral meeting ground for both groups. By 1924 a number of other organizations that had previously been limited to German Jews opened their doors to newcomers, and the era of discrimination against Yiddish speakers had virtually ended (Dalin and Rosenbaum 1997:72).

The trends toward self-help, the creation of religious, social, cultural, and philanthropic organizations, and the development of new ties to Hartford provided enough aspects to appeal to a diverse population with a wide range of religious and secular interests. Although predicated on the immigrants' communities of origin, the emerging Hartford Jewish community necessarily differed from all of them because no one group was able to impose its model on those from other places. Nevertheless, the Jews believed themselves to be a community despite their differences in style and divergent world views and were willing to work together to create a social and religious framework for their new lives.

Education and Americanization: New Secular Trends

Coming from a tradition that respected education as a form of religious expression, the immigrants transferred this value to the secular arena, flocking to general education, to English classes, and to vocational training courses, thus continuing the trend toward secular education that had begun with the European Enlightenment. Although many men were literate in religious Hebrew as well as in the everyday Yiddish and in some cases the Russian, Belorussian, Polish, or Ukrainian of their former neighbors, these were no longer the languages of daily commerce, and the newcomers were forced to wrestle with English as they entered the American economy. Even those with little education themselves realized that education was the key to their children's economic success in America.

Jewish girls as well as boys attended public schools along with other young immigrants. There they learned English and began to alter their Eastern European Jewish ways, in many cases with both the children and the parents eager for Americanization (Sachar 1990:71). This commitment to public education was an "act of faith" for the Jews who trusted that religion would not be an issue in the schools. If America's acceptance of the Jews as part of the immigrant masses without specific discrimination required a shift on their part from religion as the arbiter of their public lives to religion as a private affair, many were willing to accommodate. Ida Block was nine years old when she began public school in Hartford, where her first teacher was Annie Fisher,[7] a Jewish model for many immigrant school children.

> She understood the foreign child because she had been a foreign child herself. She would instruct you what to read, what to do, to behave yourself. She'd take both of your hands. 'Give me your hands. Ida, now Ida, say thee. That's good. Now say three. That's good. Now just listen to me. Say fifteen.' We got the accent so quickly you'd think we were American born. That was her method. It wasn't always the grammar method from the book. She would hold your hands, and how could you go wrong? (Cohen 1983)

After public school ended for the day, many Jewish children attended supplementary programs offering traditional or modified Jewish education or secular Yiddish socialist instruction. Parents were forced to decide which of these alternatives—if any—was appropriate for their American children. Sid Abrams attended a part-time Hebrew program.

> In Hebrew school we learned to read the letters which are the same for Yiddish. There were a lot of papers around so I picked up reading Yiddish too. We had in Hartford two public Hebrew schools. There was also a smaller private one. The Talmud Torah, where I went, was on Pleasant Street.

Ben and Rachel Cohen disagreed on which type of Jewish education they should select for their son.

> My wife, politically, leans more towards the left and wishes to bring the child up in a more proletarian manner. Besides his regular schooling, she

> also wishes to send him to a workers' school. I am more conservative and claim that the child will decide for himself when he will arrive at a more understandable age. (Tonken 1938)

For the children there was no learning about *Yiddishkeit* per se. They were expected to absorb Jewish life in its entirety as had their parents in the old country where the Jewish language, calendar, and ethos were imbedded in community life. However, the context had changed, and the transformed Jewish patterns were often at odds with those recalled by the adults. As a result, the children's Americanized *Yiddishkeit,* focusing on immigration and resettlement, became the only collective memory they would be able to pass on to their own future descendants.

With the overall trend toward rapid accommodation with the new world, adults as well as children studied the language and history of their new home. Some like Isaac Waldman attended night school. For him the promise of *die goldene medine* had been one of opportunity, linked to education and tempered by hard work. When he first came to Hartford, he assessed his marketable skills and took a job as a tailor, a craft he had learned in Europe.

> The main thing that had intrigued me was that this was a land where one could work and go to school at night. This was the decisive factor in my decision to migrate to the United States. I had no ambitions of becoming a millionaire and then returning home to live in luxury for the rest of my life. I thirsted for education. I graduated night high school and saved enough money to enable me to go to a western co-operative college for a year. After the year was over, I went back to work and then continued my studies until I received my degree in optometry and reached the goal which I had set for myself. (Tonken 1938)

Others learned English on the job, and still others like Sonya Gersten hired tutors.

> I had a little bit education: a little Russian, a little Jewish. I came to this country; I walked on the street, and I said, How can I live like that with no English? I hired a high school boy, and he used to give me lessons. At least I learned how to go out, and I should know how to come back. One morning he said, "Take the child. Go for a walk." So I start walking. From Governor Street I walked to Pleasant Street, and I got stuck, and I didn't know how to go back. And I couldn't ask. So I was sitting and waiting for somebody to come. (Cohen 1968)

Although becoming literate was no easy task for adults, many persevered, overcoming the constraint of being unable to communicate in the economic and social language of the country. At the same time, however, many adults continued to participate in the vibrant Yiddish cultural life of the city where the local Yiddish newspaper, *Die Yuddishe* [sic] *Shtimme* (The Jewish Voice),[8] supplemented the larger Yiddish papers from New York. Touring Yiddish theater troops played to Hartford audiences, as did the local Yiddish-language Jacob Gordon Dramatic Club. Hartford also had its homegrown Yiddish entertainers, the most famous of whom was Sophie Tucker, who made her debut on Front Street in her father's kosher restaurant before moving on to a career as the Red Hot Mama in nightclubs and vaudeville.

Although Yiddish frequently remained the language of the home for many adults, children carried on dual-language conversations with parents and grandparents, many of whom understood but were uncomfortable with their accented, broken English. Learning English had become a critical adaptive strategy, yet for many adults it remained a supplementary skill in their personal lives. For the children, English became the natural means of communication, and few passed on the Yiddish of their childhoods to their own American-born children.

Throughout this period the trend toward higher education increased as families who could afford to support nonproductive students encouraged their children to complete high school if not to continue with further academic training. Not only was this a continuation of the transformed religious value of prestige through education, but for boys in particular there was also a clear linkage between education and economic success.[9]

Girls, who had frequently been denied an education or severely limited in the types of schools and courses available to them in Russia, also continued to make educational gains but at a lower level and slower rate. Few immigrant families were able or willing to provide expensive college educations for girls who were expected to marry and move out of the marketplace while still young. Nevertheless, the number of Jewish women in higher education was slowly growing as those who attended college inaugurated a trend in which succeeding generations have remained in school longer and have achieved higher levels of training and education (Sapinsky 1916 in Marcus 1981:702). American-born Myrna Jacobs remembers her family's attitude toward education.

> In our family it was taken for granted that every kid would go to college. Now, this wasn't true in all families. My two older brothers graduated: one Harvard and the second one Trinity, at the top of his class, and he got his master's at Harvard. I went to UConn. I quit college after two years because the school, I didn't think, was intellectual enough. A friend did the same thing. We went to New York to learn to type and to take shorthand. I took night courses at Columbia. I've been always taking courses, but I never did what I should have done to get a degree.

This shift from religious education to the secular was almost universal in Hartford where there were no *yeshivot* or other facilities for religious training at the highest levels. In any case, the thrust for most students was toward the type of academic achievement that could be translated into economic success, a strategy which had been almost impossible except for a select few Jews to pursue in the Russian Empire.

Searching for Economic Security

Although the economy varied over the fifty years of this immigration period with some times more receptive than others to newcomers, many Jews selected Hartford because they had heard that it was a good place to make a living. For those who were willing to struggle and be flexible, there was almost always employment that did not require much English. Not only did industry provide jobs for some immigrants, but it also created a demand for the support services required by city dwellers so that the Jews were able to find a variety of niches in the Connecticut economy.[10] Among the occupations available for those who arrived with few resources were jobs as laborers, factory workers, and peddlers. For those with some education or training, there were positions as skilled craftsmen or retail and office assistants. In addition, some religious school teachers, rabbis, and other religious functionaries found work in their fields. Many newcomers began as did Chaim Shapiro, who worked with his father as a peddler, selling fruits and vegetables from their horse-drawn wagon.

> In the beginning there was discrimination. I couldn't get a decent job. They always gave me the worst they had because I was Jewish. Take it or leave it, and the time was bad so I took it. I got a job delivering milk. I worked for them for thirty-five years. In the beginning it was $26, then $28 a week. There were no set hours at that time. I had a route. I used to start at 12 o'clock in the morning, and I delivered until 7. Then I used to have breakfast. About 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock I used to go out collecting until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. That's close to fifteen hours a day, six days a week. (Magda 1975)

Others such as Isaac Waldman, who became an optometrist, learned new skills that brought them higher incomes and more prestige. While most immigrants dreamed of moving up the socioeconomic ladder, a few who had been relatively prosperous in Russia found unanticipated problems as they struggled to provide for their families in new occupations. Myron Tsurkin's father, who had lived well in Russia, could not produce enough money to recreate their former lives.

> For my dad and mother, things were very different and difficult. Father faced the situation squarely and unflinchingly. He was given a job as

> a plain laborer in a tobacco shop. Mother had to scrape and skimp to make ends meet. This was hard on my parents who had never known want. In order to help the folks financially, I peddled papers after school. This early "business" experience gave me an insight into the struggle for existence. (Tonken 1938)

Another critical immigrant strategy was to open a business based on a small amount of capital and the labor of family members. Ida Block's father began as a fruit peddler until he could afford to open a grocery store, eventually parlaying his profits into several lucrative business ventures, which allowed him to move out of the immigrant community into the economic mainstream. Michael Singer was also one of those determined to control his own economic production.

> I did not come to Hartford in order to seek employment but to go into some kind of business. I had no idea whatsoever as what I was going to do. My relatives promised to help me get started, and before a month had passed I was on my own. The only investment lay in buying a horse and wagon. My daily routine consisted in driving out to nearby farms and buying a few head of cattle and then selling them in the slaughter house in the city. In this way I was my own boss, and in the capacity of middle man my profits were very good. I enjoyed this outdoor work, and besides I had no one to tell me what to do and when to do it. Of course, I found it hard at first to do business with people who did not understand my language nor I theirs, but this difficulty was overcome very easily. (Tonken 1938)

It is clear from the earliest days that the Russian Jews were meeting the American economy at diverse points and were achieving a variety of results as they became absorbed into the daily life of their new world (cf. Bodnar 1985). Economic conditions between 1881 and 1924 varied, however, and a specific individual's adjustment frequently depended on when he or she had immigrated. Several times during this period labor unrest, stemming from difficult working conditions and low pay, resulted in strikes, which the workers invariably lost. There were several depressions, with the Panic of 1893 and the national slump of 1914 the most serious before World War I. Nevertheless, Hartford industry, supported by wealthy banks and insurance companies, always recovered and required more workers. During World War I, 650 Hartford Jews served in the military, Jewish garment workers produced uniforms, and scrap-metal dealers collected and processed iron and steel for the war effort (Dalin and Rosenbaum 1997:57). Although the Connecticut defense industry with its many Jewish workers had produced 54 percent of the munitions used by the federal government (Fraser 1988:45), bringing prosperity to the state as a whole, after the Armistice and the cessation of war contracts in 1918, Connecticut plunged into depression.

Nationwide, labor unrest and the fear of Bolshevik revolutionaries generated a frantic hunt for radicals among the immigrants, with Connecticut political leaders convinced that the threat of Communism warranted the arrest of suspected rebels (Fraser 1988:50). Fearful Connecticut Yankees, led by Governor Marcus Holcomb, focused on a variety of groups, specifically the Greeks of Hartford, suspected radicals in the Naugatuck Valley, and Yale students in New Haven (Roth 1979:83–84). Although this was a tense period in Hartford, the Red Scare did not affect the Jews as much as it did in other cities because Hartford did not harbor a large Jewish radical or revolutionary population. Sid Abrams discusses this era.

> The newspapers used to have cartoons of long-bearded people and someone running around with a big smoky bomb in his hand. The Red Scare never registered to me. Granted, everybody talked about Bolsheviks and that sort of thing. We had in Hartford left-leaning groups, and we had a lot of people who came here who were called socialists, but I don't recall having anybody being that worried.

By 1920, the Red Scare was over, leaving in its wake an increased pressure on immigrants to "Americanize." Throughout the war and its aftermath, however, Hartford Jews had been less concerned about their own safety than about family members remaining in the war-torn Pale. When immigration resumed after the Armistice in 1918, they redoubled their efforts to locate their relatives and bring them to America.

The Beginning of Immigration Restriction

Although the postwar depression had ended by 1923 and industry had begun to produce again at war-time levels in Connecticut (Roth 1979:177), providing jobs for newcomers who spoke little English but were willing to work for low wages, the stage for immigration restriction had been set nationwide. To many in the general population, immigrants seemed to be the source of the disruption in industry, the creators of the squalor and disorder in the large cities, and the disseminators of anarchy. Restrictive immigration legislation became a popular solution for all social ills. For many Jews the threat was immediate and personal as it became clear that those who did not emigrate promptly would be locked out by quotas. Among those who came to Hartford at that time were Molly and Herschel Gottesman.

> My brother sent money to take us to America. He took our father and mother first. Then they closed up America. Without a visa you can't come in. We got stuck in Rumania. By this time he sold his store; he sold his car to bring us. He borrowed money. He spent $15,000 before he brought us because we were stuck there for two years. We had to go through HIAS.[11] (Magda 1974)

In 1920 Vermont Senator William P. Dillingham, spokesman for the Immigration Restriction League, succeeded in establishing a quota system for all immigrants. This bill, which went into effect in June 1921, admitted a number equal to 3 percent of the foreign-born population living in the United States in 1910 and was clearly directed toward limiting the number of Italians and Eastern European Jews. It set 50,000 as the quota for Jews in 1922 and 1923, a reduction from the 120,000 immigrating in the previous fiscal year. In 1924 a second bill reduced the quotas to 2 percent of the foreign-born population based on the 1890 census. Only 10,292 Jews were permitted to immigrate, effectively cutting off Jewish immigration (Sanders 1988:386–94).

By the late 1920s, Russian Jews had been settling in Hartford for fifty years with each succeeding cohort interacting with a constantly changing context. Despite the allegiance of many Jews to Judaism and to its ethnic identity, they were determined to become good American citizens. Individuals, weighing the alternatives offered by America in terms of the costs to their personal lives, made decisions that would eventually aggregate into group strategies. These nascent trends grew out of what had seemed at the time to be a series of personal exchanges: Yiddish in exchange for English, public schools in exchange for religious education, a greater degree of economic security for Saturdays devoted to religious observance, a reduction in intergroup boundaries for publicly displayed religious markers, secular ethnic and/or American art, music, and theater for a specifically religious cultural life, and substantive citizenship in exchange for outsider status.

Always, however, there was a flow of newcomers, bringing with them the old ways and reminding the earlier cohorts of how things were done at home. Although often ridiculed as "greenhorns" or "greeners," the new immigrants were a bond with the previous "authentic" and slowed the pace of Americanization somewhat. With the final implementation of immigration restriction—which coincided with Stalin's closing of the borders in the new Soviet Union—and personal connections reduced to letters and an occasional newcomer, the transformation of Russian immigrant Jews into American Jews and the concomitant development of American Jewry into a unique, multifaceted entity began in earnest.

4

The Consolidation of the Hartford Jewish Community

> It seems to me, we had islands. Each one had its own from different countries. They kind of clung together because they were strangers in a strange land. It wasn't until the twenties that some of the Americanized Jews started to form the predecessor of the Hartford Federation. Without any federal help, we bought ten or twelve acres of land and built a children's home on Blue Hills Avenue. We had an old people's home on Washington Street. This was all done by the Jewish Community.
>
> —Sid Abrams

The Area of Second Settlement

The Americanization process in Hartford centered around the development of a community that acknowledged the dominance of the German Jews in some areas by virtue of their date of arrival and economic position, yet permitted the enormous number of Russian Jews and other Eastern European immigrants to adapt to the new context, imprinting their own Jewish style on the city and setting the pattern for Hartford Jewish life. Without community agreement on a fixed reference point for the "authentic" and/or the types of social control that their previous experience had led them to expect, Hartford Jews were relatively free to examine America as they saw it and to select those aspects that incorporated not only their personal realities but also their dreams. The goal for many was to build satisfactory personal lives, predicated on family solidarity and economic success. Many combined this with working toward creating a multifaceted, nurturing Jewish community, even if did not resemble their European world. Whether the newcomers realized it or not, their conceptions of Jewish ethnicity were also changing, as were their relationships with the religion that had defined every aspect of their past lives.

By the 1920s the Jews had begun to move out of the immigrant East Side, primarily toward the northwestern part of the city although a few moved to other areas to be near their businesses. The area around Blue Hills Avenue with its kosher butchers, other specialized merchants, synagogues, and Jewish communal organizations became a bustling Jewish neighborhood where the religion with its values and culture was never far from the surface. Sid Abrams grew up in this area of second settlement.

> The Garden Street area became the business center, and that was the North End. My father owned real estate there in the twenties. Agudas Achim built their synagogue in the 1920s to follow their people, and that was on Greenfield Street. After World War I, building really started up. We had a Jewish high school. Of course, they weren't 100 percent Jewish, but they were a high percentage. The Jewish kids dominated: salutatorian, valedictorian, and there were the football players and the basketball players too. They were into everything.

Despite the occasional fights, epithets, and common knowledge that Jews were not welcome everywhere (cf. Sorin 1997:181), Hartford's Jewish children were expected to achieve the American dream of socioeconomic mobility. Not subjected to the circumscription of the European style anti-Semitism that had restricted their parents as a group, the children believed that they were limited only by their own personal talents and resources, and many wanted to succeed on American terms even if that meant developing new behavior patterns that separated them even further from the *Yiddishkeit* of their parents' previous lives.

The Depression and Anti-Semitism: Limiting the Refugees

When the Depression hit Hartford, many of those immigrants who had managed to scrape together some sort of a living earlier found life becoming increasingly difficult. Molly Gottesman's husband was laid off when his factory closed.

> My husband couldn't find a job when he went out of the factory. He didn't know what to do, so he bought a small store. I had small children. I had to drag them to the store to help him out. It was hard at that time. When Roosevelt came in, it was starting to be a little better. We were working. We had the grocery store open from early in the morning until late at night, so we didn't have much time to attend the synagogue. We went only on the high holidays. (Magda 1974)

By the spring of 1932, 14,000 of the unemployed in Connecticut lived in Hartford, and over the following year, statewide employment dropped an additional 14 percent (Roth 1979:194–97). Although Sam Davidoff held onto his job at the Brown Thompson Department Store, where he began working in 1927, his friends were not so fortunate.

> I worked about 50 hours a week, maybe more some weeks. I started there for $12 a week. Things in Hartford were very rough, very much unemployment. I think that of the kids I went to school with I was about the only one working. Roosevelt's New Deal programs kept the kids off the streets. Even if they just held onto a shovel, at least they were doing something. (Magda 1975)

Despite the severe downturn in the economy, not all Jews suffered. Sid Abrams's businessman father, for example, had "some reserves that he could turn on although we did some belt tightening."

One response to the Depression for those Jews who had been steeped in the socialism of the Pale was to campaign for socialist programs and candidates to alleviate the plight of Americans caught up in the Depression. Myrna Jacobs says:

> We felt very strongly that socialism had something to offer because times were very bad, beginning in 1929. So, we became active socialists, my husband, my brother, and I. Norman Thomas was running for president, and we were very active in organizing a meeting for Norman Thomas, 1932, before the election. When Roosevelt was elected, we became Democrats [because they believed that his programs embodied the socialist ideals.]

Chief among the non-Jewish local Democrats was Yale professor, Wilbur Cross, who became governor in 1931, elected by a new coalition of ethnic voters, many of whom worked in the cities. By 1933 the situation had deteriorated so badly that Cross appointed the Emergency Relief Commission to solicit federal aid for Connecticut. The following year that agency distributed $15 million in federal funds and another $14 million supplied by the state for public works projects, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), National Youth Act (YPA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) (Roth 1979:197–98). Among the ethnic writers hired by the WPA was Morton Tonken, whose interviews with Russian Jews form the basis for much of the ethnographic material in chapters 3 and 4.

As the Depression deepened and Americans across the country began to fear that their personal situations would never improve, anti-Semitism took root in a variety of different settings, surfacing in attacks by Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent* newspaper; in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* which was closely linked to Ford's publication; in the growth of the anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic Ku Klux Klan; in the radio harangues of Father Charles Coughlin; and in the quotas limiting the admission of Jewish students to prestigious universities[1] (Higham 1984:174). However unpleasant this was for the Jews, it never became the institutionalized anti-Semitism that pervaded Russia, and Jews were allowed to integrate into America to a great degree even though some groups maintained social barriers against them.

At the same time, however, Hartford Jews continued to worry about their relatives abroad. Those who corresponded with family members knew that Stalin's unrelenting pressure on the country as a whole had culminated in years of terror and purges. Additionally, the Jews often believed that they were selected as special targets of his wrath. The letters Michael Singer received reminded him of the virulent anti-Semitism he had fled years before and reinforced his belief in the need for a Jewish homeland.

> Friends and relatives back home are in a very precarious position. They inform us that living conditions are very bad and that their lives are always in danger. I send money and clothing to my relatives and in this way hope to relieve some of their immediate needs. But I feel that this is no solution to the Jewish problem. Even in America, where Jews are tolerated, I feel that there is an undercurrent of anti-Semitism. Compared to what goes on in Europe, this is very mild. (Tonken 1938)

Meanwhile, after Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the harassment of the Jews in Germany and the plight of the refugees began to frighten many American Jews and to force them to search for solutions other than immigration to the United States where quotas continued to be strictly enforced. Despite the Depression and the large number of Jews with limited resources, many contributed to the international Jewish welfare agencies to support rescue and resettlement. Hartford Zionists were active in this period, raising funds, lobbying in Washington, and promoting a Jewish homeland as a response to the worsening situation in Europe (JHSGH 1934). Sid Abrams was part of this movement.

> We were holding meetings constantly, and speakers were coming here. In fact, Hartford was the home of Abraham Goldstein, a national leader of Zionism. The surprising thing is, Zionism crossed an awful lot of group lines. All we wanted was a state. We didn't care what factions came to live there as long as they were Jews. Even so, Orthodox Jews did not believe in Zionism. My father was one of them. He said that he believed the Messiah was the only one who could give us the way.

In 1934 at a large rally against German fascism sponsored by the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the Socialist Party of Hartford, local leaders called for the world to rally against Hitler. For those who recalled the violent rhetoric and pogroms in Russia, the fact that prominent Christians in Hartford attended a Jewish mass meeting and spoke out against fascism in Germany and anti-Semitism in America emphasized the growing links between the two communities and movement toward the full Americanization for the Jews in Hartford. Nevertheless, many American workers, reeling from the Depression and fearful of economic competition, were not interested in lifting immigration restrictions or in rescuing Jewish refugees who might compete with them for scarce jobs.

In the same year, when the Joint Distribution Committee—which was also active within the Soviet Union during this period—asked American Jews to raise $1,200,000 for immediate, temporary relief abroad (JHSGH 1934), Zionist leader Abraham Goldstein challenged the Hartford Jewish community to contribute to a permanent solution to the refugee problem.

> Leadership of world Jewry is not satisfied with temporary relief alone. The Jewish Agency under the leadership of Dr. Weizmann has made a plan calling for the settlement of 200,000 German Jews in Palestine within the next four years. To make possible the carrying out of this plan will require $2,000,000 from American Jewry yearly for four years. That Palestine offers the only permanent relief to such conditions as exist all over the world is also not open to conjecture. We, as a community, must decide how we can carry out these tasks. (JHSGH 1934)

Although the daily lives of American Jews were not generally affected by European-style anti-Semitism, one serious expression of national policy against the Jews remained. Despite the fact that President Franklin D. Roosevelt was approached by a variety of Jewish leaders, apprising him of the situation in Europe and asking for his assistance, he did not intervene with the State Department to modify its strict immigration quotas (cf. Morganthau in Simons 1988:50). Because of this inflexibility, which many later interpreted as an anti-Semitic policy,[2] only 6,514 of the 63,000 Jews leaving Germany in 1933 and 1934 were admitted to the United States (Morse 1968:144). Nevertheless, an estimated 250,000 refugees were admitted between 1933 and 1946 (Wyman 1968:209), and enough had come to Hartford by 1946 to form a small German-speaking community of approximately two hundred families (JHSGH 1946). Even though this group did not have a major cultural impact on the established Jewish community, it was cohesive enough to found a German orthodox synagogue, Tikvoh Chadoshoh in 1943, and to provide a social center for its members. Myrna Jacobs remembers these refugees.

> In 1933 two families came to Hartford. One man was an internist, and the other was an ophthalmologist. We met them when they came at the beginning of the troubles. After that we knew who later arrivals were. Rabbi Bodenheimer, also a refugee, started the synagogue on Cornwall Street, and my husband worked with a lot of them, but they were not a part of our particular group.

By the end of the Depression, immigration barriers had effectively curtailed transfusions of European *Yiddishkeit,* creating an atmosphere where the Americanization process could progress unchecked by continual reminders of European behavior. Religious practices had shifted from that of the idealized orthodoxy of the Pale to a variety of new expressions, and Jews devised new social structures in the workplace, the synagogue, the political arena, and the schools.

World War II and the Aftermath

Although Hartford Jews were involved in the war, its impact was qualitatively different from that which occurred in Europe. On the most basic level, the war never touched American soil, and American civilians were never subjected to the randomness of dislocation and the devastation of violence. In particular, American Jews escaped the horrors of planned annihilation. Nevertheless, fifty-two Jewish members of the Armed Forces from Hartford were killed during the war (Silverman 1970:305–14). Ida Block reflects on both the distress felt by those who waited at home for their relatives in the military and their anxiety about family members in Europe.

> My brother was missing for a long, long time. He came back an old man and sick, a prisoner of war in the Japanese mines. He was in that march. The war gave us all a lot of heartache, I think the Jews more than any other people. That made us very, very sad. We lost a lot of people over across, relatives. My father and mother figured up we lost about 150 people out of the two families. The Holocaust made people very old and sad. (Cohen 1983)

Throughout the 1940s Hartford Zionists, supported by the entire spectrum of Jewish clergy, continued to hold rallies, raise funds, and lobby Washington on behalf of the Jews suffering in Europe and for a Jewish homeland. During this period Zionist leader Harry Kleinman estimated that nearly every Hartford Jewish family had members who belonged to one Zionist organization or another (Dalin and Rosenbaum 1997:120–21). Finally, in November 1947, the United States and the Soviet Union engineered a plan in the United Nations for the establishment of separate Jewish and Arab states. Even so, there has been some speculation that Roosevelt, shortly before his death in 1945, had begun to waver in his support for a Jewish state; Harry S. Truman was much more sympathetic (Johnson 1987:524–26).

Although Hartford welcomed the partition vote with celebrations and religious services, the main rejoicing took place on May 16, 1948, as Hartford's non-Jewish Mayor Coleman, wearing a *yarmulka* at a rally at Emanuel Synagogue, declared May 17 "Jewish State Day." The *Hartford Times* in a banner headline proclaimed: "Rejoicing over Israel: They Waited 2,000 Years" (JHSGH 1948). Myrna Jacobs was one of the more than three thousand Hartford Jews who attended the celebration.

> There was a meeting called at the Emanuel in Hartford, and people were just streaming into that synagogue. This was a very, very special, important time. I just felt it was something unbelievable, too unbelievable to be true. It was a simply marvelous thing. The place was jammed, and the overflow crowd went to Agudas Achim; they were right next to each other on Greenfield Street.

The founding of Israel had enormous symbolic impact for the Jews, removing them from the ranks of the homeless and powerless, reminding many of their original covenant with God, and reestablishing their faith in the good will of others. Clearly the public experience of the Hartford Jewish community, bolstered by the pro-Israel stance of the United States government and the sympathy of the local non-Jewish population was in direct contrast to the Soviet Jews' private acknowledgment of a momentous juncture in Jewish history.

The only sizable refugee group to be admitted after the war was a mixed group, many of whom had lived in displaced persons camps for several years. Since many were from Communist countries, the federal government considered them to be victims of the Cold War not specifically Jewish refugees. Among the 516 survivors resettled in Hartford by 1952 (Dalin and Rosenbaum 1997:158) were Jennie Kovnor and her family. She says, "Our uncle sent papers. We had friends from the DP [displaced persons camp] that came to Hartford, and we were in touch with them. It was a good choice. We liked Hartford very much."

As a whole, this disparate group in Hartford was not internally similar enough or large enough to bring a renewed sense of *Yiddishkeit* except in individual instances. Indeed, many of the newcomers looked forward into America, closing themselves off from the painful past. As the isolation from European Jewish culture and religion continued, the unique American Jewish forms continued to develop.

Transitions in the Postwar Period

The general mobilization during the war had brought about a widespread change in attitude among Americans about mixing with people from other white ethnic groups. Not only had second- and third-generation Jews and other ethnics served in the armed forces together, but they also had attended the public schools together, spoke unaccented English, and were less readily differentiated from the children of more established groups. This transformation, which was beginning to take place in all groups of European ancestry, would prepare the way for what Alba (1990:312) terms the pan-Euro-ethnicity of the late twentieth century.

As the trends toward Americanization and secularization continued, many veterans of all ethnic groups did not return to their immigrant neighborhoods, using their government benefits to buy homes in new suburbs. This affected the Jews, as many families joined the exodus to the surrounding towns, primarily to Bloomfield and West Hartford although a few went to the more distant suburbs on both sides of the Connecticut River. Here Jewish life centered around modern synagogues where membership was based on religious practice rather than on previous geographical location or language. Sid Abrams and his family were among the first to move to West Hartford in 1950.

> There was a big transition into the single family syndrome. More of us could afford houses. West Hartford was the obvious choice; there were a few factors there that went into it. I'm not an extremist, religiously speaking, but I did want to be near an orthodox synagogue, and there was only one synagogue in West Hartford at the time. The area was just starting to be built up on the other side [in what became the primary Jewish neighborhood in West Hartford]. We found this house. Mostly Jewish people lived here.

In the decade between 1950 and 1960 the population of Connecticut increased, both because of the baby boom and the inmigration of job seekers. In those ten years alone more than 56,000 people moved into Hartford, but 95,000 left resulting in a decline of approximately 9 percent of the population as people moved to new houses in attractive suburbs. Some of these found employment near their new homes at relocated workplaces while others commuted in newly available cars on new roads. During the same period, the population of Bloomfield, the suburb directly to the north of the Blue Hills section and one of the areas where Jews bought houses, increased from 5,700 to 13,600 (Fraser 1988:61), a decisive shift from the 1930s when Myrna Jacobs and her family were among only fifteen other Jewish households in that sparsely settled suburb. By the 1980s Hartford had experienced major demographic and economic changes, with the population of the city decreasing from 177,000 to 136,000 while the immediate suburban area around it increased from 127,000 to 257,000 (Grant and Grant 1986:52), and few Jews remained in the city itself.

That the economic climate in Hartford had begun to change was not surprising, given that the defense industry no longer required the enormous output of the war years. What was surprising to many, however, during the decades following the war was the shift in the type of jobs available in Hartford. Factories, always a main source of employment for immigrant labor, either closed or moved to the suburbs. In 1979 only nine plants remained in Hartford, half the number of 1943. In contrast, where there had been no factories at all in the suburbs of Windsor and Windsor Locks in 1943, by 1979 there were seven (Lewis and Harmon 1986:127). Following another national trend, city jobs were becoming concentrated in the service industries including insurance, distribution, and government, all of which required a new type of employee.

In the early 1960s urban renewal destroyed the area of first Jewish settlement, the East Side immigrant neighborhood (cf. Silberman 1985:175–80). During the same decade the Jewish community around Blue Hills Avenue began to succumb—following a national pattern—to blockbusting and real estate steering that brought in Blacks and broke up some old city neighborhoods. Eventually the service organizations—the Greater Hartford Jewish Federation, the Jewish Community Center, and the Jewish Family Service—moved to West Hartford. Only Mount Sinai Hospital and the Hebrew Home and Hospital remained in Hartford.[3] The tight community ties began to loosen as almost all of the Jews moved out of the area of second settlement and away from the Eastern European Jewish past. Jennie Kovnor recalls those times.

> Then the '60s came, and the *schvartzes* [Blacks] came. The whole neighborhood changed. When the troubles started [in the late 1960s], we moved to West Hartford. This is a Jewish neighborhood, but there is an Italian man and a Frenchman. The synagogues moved too. Emanuel moved, Agudas Achim moved, and Young Israel.

The economic and political orientation of American Jews, including those in Hartford, also shifted during this period as they became more affluent and comfortable in American society, changing from mostly working-class to a more middle-class and professional status. In some cases this was a result of the postwar federal housing, education, and occupational training assistance programs for veterans, which positioned many young Jews for new lives in a higher socioeconomic bracket.

In addition, the Jews had transformed themselves from passive victims of European economic and political vicissitudes into active participants in American community life. While most of the early Jewish politicians had represented only the immigrant neighborhoods, this was no longer the case. The Jewish star of mid-twentieth-century politics was undoubtedly Abraham Ribicoff, Connecticut's only Jewish governor, who also served as a representative to Congress, the first Connecticut Jew to be appointed to a presidential cabinet as John F. Kennedy's Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and as Connecticut's first Jewish senator (Silverman 1970:77).

Although most Jews had become staunch Democrats under Roosevelt, by the Vietnam Era a small but increasing percentage began to look to the Republicans, a party standing behind the individual and supportive of business, a traditional source of Jewish income. This slight alteration in voting patterns also reflected the discomfort of some older people with the hostility of the counterculture—including some of their own children and grandchildren—to the middle-class lives they had worked so hard to achieve and with the denigration of a country that had treated them so well. Additionally, some could not bring themselves to vote for Democratic candidates and platforms that appeared to favor a Third World that threatened Israel's security. Anti-Semitism had always been an issue of the Right in American, but many now perceived it as coming from the New Left (Dawidowicz 1980:150). Herschel Gottesman, for example, had voted Democratic for fifty-two years before he switched to Richard M. Nixon, a vote he later regretted although his wife Molly continued to feel that they had made the right choice. Their children, however, remained Democrats throughout (Magda 1974; cf. Bershtel and Graubard 1992:249–50).

Unlike the traditional Russian Jewish model in which Jews were offered few opportunities for choice within the religious framework, American Jews over the course of the century became increasingly free to select from among various styles of Jewish life and the degrees of religious observance that were evolving. From the beginning, many of the immigrants and their descendants had been willing to adapt, to break the religion into segments, and to reintegrate them into new forms that they perceived as appropriate for the new context. These new patterns of Jewish life and religious observance, which were rarely tied to specific European locales or folkways, were in a constant state of transformation as many Jews dropped the daily requirements of the orthodox religion in favor of Conservative Judaism or became Reform[4] (cf. Gordon 1964:164–65).

Serving as social centers as well as religious and educational foci, the new suburban synagogues were Americanized with English as the common language, although Hebrew remained as part of the liturgy to varying degrees. Synagogue religious schools were often weak and ineffectual, transmitting little in the way of substantive scholarship or European community values as expressed in terms of *Yiddishkeit* to the American children. Since many American Jews were in the process of rejecting what they perceived of as outmoded and limiting European traditions, they invented new ones—both on the daily level and in the synagogue (Joselit 1994:89–134)[5]—which they perceived as being better adapted to the American context. What did develop in all but the orthodox institutions where traditional learning was perpetuated were new American curricula that incorporated a truncated version of Jewish history and various other aspects of Jewish experience, thereby limiting the children's access to deeper levels of scholarship and religious thought.

At the same time, a growing unaffiliated portion of the Jewish population, uninterested in the constraints of ethnicity or religion that might inhibit their personal freedom or their ability to blend into the American milieu, opted out of religious practice and/or ethnicity altogether. This liberation from the immigrant past and from what many perceived as the parochialism of religion offered new opportunities based on talent, achievement, and recognition in the larger world (cf. Gordon 1964:224–232). Jews were now divided between those who chose to participate in community religious life and those who did not. As the national trend toward secularization and tolerance of plurality among the white population increased, religion was becoming less of a driving force in the lives of individuals or as a critical boundary marker between groups. With overt anti-Semitism no longer acceptable in American society as white America became more homogeneous, the Jews continued to move into the mainstream.

The Six Day War: The American Jewish Response

Although American Jews had celebrated the birth of Israel, supplied funds and materiel for the War of Independence, and been concerned about the 1956 war in the Sinai Peninsula, the emotional response to the 1967 Six Day War[6] and the events preceding it was unprecedented. During May and June as the Arab armies massed on Israel's borders and world leaders neither protested nor intervened, individuals from all segments of American Jewish society, regardless of their previous religious observance or their ethnic identification, expressed their fear that Israel was facing a second Holocaust by contributing more than $1,000,000 in cash, purchasing another $190,000,000 in Israel Bonds, and by volunteering to go to Israel to participate in any useful way (Silberman 1985:185). Myrna Jacobs, who had been a member of the Roses of Zion youth group and later of Hadassah, a women's organization that funds and supports health and childcare facilities and vocational training in Israel, was in the Hartford delegation that went to Washington to lobby for American support for Israel.

> We had an all-day meeting on the grounds of the White House. It was while we were there that one of the speakers announced that the Israelis had taken Jerusalem. Up to that point we didn't even know whether Israel would win. It was a very frightening thing.

This sudden new internalization of the danger to Israel for many who had not previously been Zionists altered their relationship with the Jewish state. As the shock created by the Six Day War began to reverberate throughout the Jewish population, it generated a new awareness of Judaism, personal and ethnic identity, and the desire for group solidarity.

"Save Soviet Jewry"

Although American Jewish and Israeli leaders had been aware of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union after World War II, they did not mount an organized campaign on behalf of Soviet Jews nor did they organize more than a few unconnected protests at that time. This was in direct contrast to the sustained, well-orchestrated pressure that would be put on the Soviets in the succeeding decades[7] (Chernin 1999:23–24).

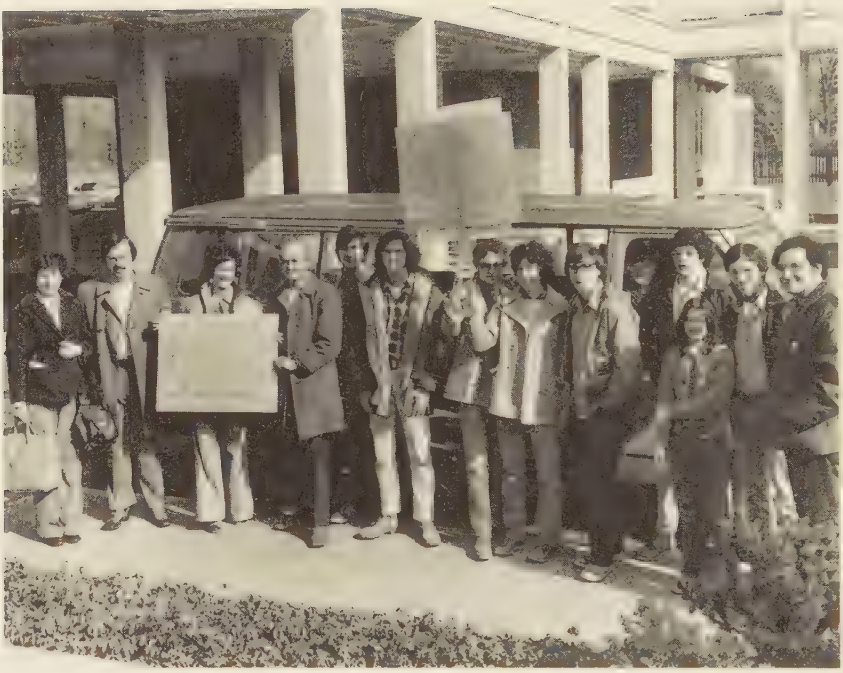


Figure 9. Robert Fishman (far right) organized groups, primarily of students, to demonstrate at the United Nations in New York for the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate, circa 1977.

By the early 1960s a small number of Israeli (primarily Nehemia Levanon of the Prime Minister's Liaison Bureau [on Soviet Jewry]) and American Jewish activists and organizations (such as the National Community Relations Council and the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry) had begun to organize around the plight of the Soviet Jews and to sponsor such events as the 1965 Eternal Light Vigil, which drew more than 10,000 people to Washington (Chernin 1999:43).

But, it was not until after the Six Day War that the American Jews—perhaps because they had been sensitized by that conflict with its threat of annihilation and by the information about Soviet Jewry disseminated by the various community organizations—began to employ a new style of political force on behalf of the Soviet Jews. The campaign brought together such divergent elements as the Jewish Labor Committee (the Bund), the orthodox Agudat, and such prominent non-Jews as Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Among the new organizations was the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, which used tactics developed in the protests against the Vietnam War to demand immediate freedom of emigration for Soviet Jews (Silberman 1985:207). All groups used publications, rallies, slogans, "Remembrance Days," and "Sabbaths of Concern," which were designed to raise the consciousness of American Jews and to put pressure on the Washington through direct meetings with government officials and on the Soviet Union itself (Sachar 1993:908).

Robert Fishman, who later came to Hartford, where he has focused much of his career in Jewish Social Work on Soviet Jewish and later New American concerns and interests, became the central political activist in Hartford for this group. As a student at the University of Maryland, Fishman had traveled to Washington regularly in the early 1970s to protest the Soviet Union's refusal to allow its Jews to emigrate. He says:

> I did everything but get arrested. Some of my friends liked the aspect of chaining themselves to the Soviet Embassy and would get arrested but never spent more than a couple of hours in jail. There was a wonderful judge whose name was Arthur Goldberg, [not the Supreme Court Justice] who late at night would get these phone calls from the Jewish community leaders, "Arthur, help these kids. Get them out of detention." I didn't go to that extreme, but I was at many of the demonstrations across from the Soviet Embassy on 16th Street where we had the right to maintain a vigil, and that's what we did, a daily vigil that lasted, maybe, twenty years. Every once in a while we would bring lengthy petitions inside the Embassy and deposit them there. I worked for the Jewish Community Council in Washington as a student, bringing other students to demonstrations that we organized there.

An important show of Jewish political strength came in the early 1970s as a result of the Soviet government's arrest of eleven Soviet citizens (nine of them Jewish) who had responded to being refused emigration visas by hijacking an airplane and demanding to go to Israel. When two of the defendants at this Leningrad trial were convicted of treason and sentenced to death and a third to twelve years of a "strict regime," Jewish activists began an international political campaign that succeeded in reducing the sentences and eventually freeing the defendants (Sachar 1993:908–909). Bob Fishman remembers this time.

> I went on the first UJA United Jewish Appeal mission to Israel for college students in 1970. That was over the winter vacation. We came back at Kennedy Airport, and we discovered what was known as the Leningrad hijacking. At the time, there was great concern that the Jews who had been involved in the hijacking (which was their way of trying to get out of the former Soviet Union and get to Israel) would be killed. They were arrested, and there was an immediate trial. This group which had gone to Israel to learn about Israel had now become a national leadership group of young people, college age people, who were protesting the Soviet government and were urging the American government—even at Kennedy Airport as we arrived—to make sure that their lives would be spared. It was a very frightening several days, and finally the Soviet Union relented.

By 1975 Robert Fishman had begun mobilizing the Hartford Jewish community on behalf of the Soviet Jews. Working with Jack "Spike" Spiegel, Del M. Delott Garber, Judge Jerry Wagner, Jeffery Mines, and others, he organized teen trips to demonstrations in New York and a surprisingly well-attended concert by Shlomo Carlebach, the charismatic rabbi and singer from New York, who sang several songs about the Soviet Jews. By 1977 the Soviet Jewish Task Force was in place in the community, and Hartford was becoming well known in the national Jewish community as an active supporter of Soviet Jewish rights. One aspect of this activism was the Women's Plea for Soviet Jewry, part of a national movement, which took place every December for many years. Famous entertainers, such as Carlebach and Mary Travers of Peter, Paul, and Mary, who had been in the Soviet Union and had met with refuseniks (those who had been refused exit visas and were being harassed by the Soviet government), would sing and politicians would speak. Diane Cohen, who later became an English teacher for the Soviet Jews in Hartford, attended several of these events.

> It was a real show of support. I remember lots of women in the synagogues where the rallies were held. They had speeches, people from the government. They would tell us statistics of how many got out and how many still wanted to get out. I always signed petitions, lots of petitions, and we sent postcards.

Over the years, many politicians were involved in the movement. Robert Fishman recalls one highly publicized telephone call to a refusenik from then Congressman William Cotter.

> We got the press to come to come to Cotter's office where we were making a call to a refusenik. Cotter was sweating under the lights and arguing with the Soviet operator. "I'm a Congressman, a United States Congressman, and you won't put my telephone call through," and they wouldn't. After several attempts, he hung up the phone, looked at the press, and said, "I guess we don't have a story here." And whoever it was from the press—bless her heart—said, "No, Congressman, this *is* the story." At later times we did get through to other refuseniks with the assistance of other political figures such as Barbara Kennelly, the Secretary of State in Connecticut, and Joe Lieberman, the Attorney General.

Another manifestation of this use of political muscle was the pressure put on the American government to include Soviet Jews as part of the agreement to limit nuclear weapons and to initiate a variety of cooperative ventures with the U.S.S.R.[8] including the possibility of granting it Most Favored Nation (MFN) status. Although this status would have had little economic effect in terms of international trade, the potential significance was that the United States would have the same official relationship with the Soviet Union as it had with its closest allies. There were, however, still questions about human rights violations. As the negotiations progressed, the Soviets increased the numbers of visas to fifteen hundred a month, effectively cutting off criticism of its lack of concern about human rights, particularly its refusal to allow free emigration, an issue which primarily affected Soviet Jews. Suddenly in an abrupt reversal of policy, the Soviets instituted a tax on people holding any type of diploma, affecting almost all of the Jews in the Western republics (Peele sic 1994:1, 7). Coupled with the general harassment of Jews applying for exit visas, this suggested that the U.S.S.R. might be preparing to limit or curtail Jewish emigration. Meanwhile, as the education tax kept the repression of the Soviet Jews in the public eye, the American presidential campaign geared up with Richard M. Nixon vying for reelection with a number of Democratic hopefuls, including Edmund Muskie and Henry M. (Scoop) Jackson, both of whom had previously sponsored legislation to assist Israel in resettling Soviet refugees. All were well aware of the Jewish vote in key states.

For more than two years bipartisan supporters of what would become the Jackson-Vanik amendment[9] to link MFN status with human rights and free emigration discussed this proposal with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who then negotiated with the Soviets. Although the Jackson-Vanik amendment was passed in 1975 and signed into law by President Gerald Ford, it was effectively negated by a second bill dealing with arms control and Soviet troop reduction. The provisions of this latter bill opened the door for the U.S.S.R. to begin playing with the visa numbers again, but the Soviets knew that in order to retain the MFN status, they could not halt emigration completely. As a result of this maneuvering in Washington, the Soviet government began to believe that it had to take into account the political clout of the American Jews—a factor which they probably exaggerated—in any further negotiations (Sachar 1993:919).

For American Jews two poignant images of the Soviet Jews emerged during this period. The first was symbolized by Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky, a refusenik who had been denied an exit permit by the Soviet authorities. Public attention, which frequently simplified and sentimentalized Sharansky's plight, focused on his long personal battle with Soviet authorities and generated countless commentaries in both the Jewish and mainstream news media about his struggle to practice Judaism and his persecution for applying to immigrate to Israel where he could be a "real" Jew. As Sharansky became part of the folklore of the period, Western Jews generalized—erroneously—from his particular case that he represented a huge underground of religious Soviet Jews waiting to be freed. Although Sharansky did not inspire many Soviet Jews to undertake active religious lives, his behavior and that of the other dissidents created a new model for those who began to demand freedom of ethnic expression and emigration (cf. Sharansky 1988).

The second image was that of the Exodus from Egypt. During the Passover seder as Jews recount the story of Moses' defiance of Pharaoh and the escape from slavery, many American Jews began to add a prayer for those Jews held against their wills in modern "Egypts," primarily the Soviet Union. Eventually this metaphor with its slogan "Let my people go" became the official name of the campaign to secure the release of Soviet Jews, and Operation Exodus raised millions of dollars to help fund their emigration and resettlement. American Jews, however, did not carry the metaphor far enough. They did not realize that the Soviet Jews—who had become Soviet citizens insofar as the anti-Semitism inherent in the Soviet system would allow and had reconstructed their Jewish identity within the secular Soviet context—would become the Desert Generation, remembering Egypt and unable as a group to embrace American Jewish religion and lifeways in their entirety.

Part II

EGYPT AND THE EXODUS, 1970–1984

5

Egypt

> Several professors and my husband—a circle of friends—analyzed the general and the Jewish situation. We did not believe or feel like emigration was promised because of war or international conflict. Our only hope was Israel. The Jews began to listen to the radio which was forbidden. We knew all the news about the Jews in Israel. Israel was so proud of its achievements, and we believed we had to go.
>
> —Esther Smolor

Shifting Identities

Since the Jewish language, educational system, and most of the cultural inventory had been decimated by almost fifty years of antireligious Communist rule, the generally negative anti-Semitic climate, and the desire of many Jews to succeed in the Soviet order, it is no surprise that by the late 1960s most Jews had lost the religious behaviors that had formerly set them apart from the rest of the population.[1] Without the traditional strengths of Jewish community to enhance a positive ethnicity and to permit individuals to build strong personal identities within the context of group pride and solidarity, Jews were forced to create their own self-identities from the remains of what had been an all-encompassing way of life.[2]

This new Jewish ethnicity, which grew out of the collective memory of the Holocaust, was molded by contemporary anti-Semitism and frequently expressed in terms of "Jewish suffering." It allowed Jews to survive and, in some cases, to prosper under the Soviet regime. Predicated on the concepts of reticence and endurance, it focused on the ideals of family solidarity, academic achievement in preparation for professional and technical careers, and hard work. As Jews seized the previously religious ideal of education and transformed it into the secular focus of their lives, education for fulfilling and prestigious occupations became the lodestar for many and the center of their identity within the Soviet system.

As a group Jews remained outside the political system, although some joined the Communist Party. Many believed that political activism and religious observance were only for the foolhardy because of their potential for eliciting immediate, serious consequences. Even though religious behavior per se had virtually disappeared, and Jewish cultural content was losing its saliency, remnants, generally acknowledged as "family traditions," persisted although almost universally in a modified form. At the same time, despite the hope by many Jews that they were moving into the mainstream of Soviet life, anti-Semitism continued to maintain the boundaries. As Barth has observed in cases like this, "The critical focus . . . became the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses." (1969:277).

Although many Jews might have preferred to become New Soviet Men or women, the fixed identity label remained, affecting the choices available to them and the alternatives selected by them. For many, ethnicity was limited to shaping their world view, particularly as it defined the constellation of constraints that affected them at every level. Overall, being Jewish did not, as it did in other times and places, enrich their lives or provide a theological source of strength. The Jewish identity that developed between the Revolution and the 1967 Six Day War was purely a Soviet construct. For Soviet Jews, particularly after 1930, personal contact with the outside world had virtually ceased except for a few letters exchanged by family members and for the illegal radio broadcasts and interactions between Soviet Jews and tourists, journalists, and diplomats in the large cities. Cut off from the development of pluralism of religious practice and from the Zionist national expression, they perceived their own Jewish behavior, or lack of it, in terms of the distance from the "authentic" as defined by their historical memory of preRevolution Judaism. They had no concept of either the multifaceted secular Jewish community that had developed beyond the Communist world or of the transplanted Jewish ethnicity that had been incorporated into the various contexts in which the former Russian Jews and their contemporary descendants now live. Nor did those uninterested in the limitations of the previous Russian-style orthodox Judaism realize that there were alternatives within the Jewish rubric that would allow them to behave in new religious ways.

Although these Jewish ethnicity patterns had consolidated into the primary mode of Jewish expression prior to the Six Day War, that critical event blasted the Jews out of their isolation and introduced the possibility of new alternatives. With a new collective memory incorporating the Israeli victory, the positive jokes and comments of other ethnics, and the evident discomfort of the Soviet government at the defeat of its client states, some of the old negative stereotypes began to disintegrate. The Six Day War rekindled a long-repressed sense of ethnic and/or religious identification and set the stage for new strategies that would override the behaviors of a lifetime, shake the foundation of Jewish participation in Soviet life, and throw open new avenues of Jewish self-expression.

Enduring Daily Life in the U.S.S.R.

With Jews no longer relegated to particular locations determined by law as they had been during the years before the Revolution, many people now lived in new regions and cities throughout the Soviet Union,[3] in mixed neighborhoods and buildings, and occasionally in the same apartments, with those of other nationalities. In some cases the government assigned people to specific apartments while in others workplaces supplied housing for their employees. Some individuals found apartments wherever they could, paying a premium for making their own choices. Even in the major cities, living conditions were often cramped and primitive, with long waits for new apartments. Many families were required to share bathrooms and kitchens with strangers, and in some cases, individual rooms in communal apartments were allotted to different families (cf. Rothchild 1985:120–39). Although Esther Smolor and her family were never happy with their living arrangements, Esther believed that the logistical problems—while difficult and unpleasant—were no different for Jews than for those of other nationalities.

> Kiev is a very big city with highrise buildings. Nobody has his own house. A three-room apartment plus kitchen in Russia was the best you could have. In this three-room apartment were my father, my mother, my brother and me. My brother graduated from high school and went to learn in Moldavia, a different state. [The government officials] said, "Your brother is out." After my father died, they took from us one room so now we had only two. The rooms did not belong to us but to the government. Then my husband got an apartment from his office, and my mother had to give up another room. She was living in one room.
>
> Our new building was eight stories, and we had our own apartment. In this apartment originally lived my husband, me, my daughter, and my mother-in-law, but my daughter got married and she brought her husband to the same apartment, and she had a child. It wasn't being so huge. This apartment had only three rooms, but each room was very big. All old buildings were such with a big balcony, so each family had one room, but when my daughter and her husband and her child went to the bathroom or the kitchen or out, they had to go through my room.

In other cases, people were forced to share the living space with difficult strangers. For Stella Chertkova,[4] a researcher in economics at the University of Leningrad, who lived in a communal apartment with an anti-Semitic neighbor, prejudice made daily life terrifying.

> It was a cozy and bright little room, and we were fortunate to get it. At first I thought we were fortunate with the people in the communal apart-

> ment too. Maybe, it was just a pure luck, or maybe because they were all somehow related to the Academy which "owns" the apartment, but people were quiet and not nosy [sic]. Despite that there were five rooms in the apartment and we all shared the same four-burner gas stove, there were no arguments about it. There were no arguments about cleaning the kitchen and lavatory, which we did in turn, or the usage of the single sink we had in the entire apartment for all the cooking and washing. It was a miracle, and after previous years of wandering nobody could appreciate it better than we. And then came this day so firmly engraved in my memory, vivid and frightening even years later.
>
> I locked and barricaded my door with three chairs and sat behind it shivering. "Does he know that I am Jewish?" I thought. "I never mentioned it, and he never showed if he did. My God, how come whenever I need my husband, he is not home? Or maybe, Kiril chooses the moments I am alone? If only somebody else was in the apartment, if not my husband, SOMEBODY! But nobody is in just me and him."
>
> "O-o-o-o, give me a machine gun! I'll kill all of them. Stinky Jews! Dirty Jews! The murderers. They kill Arab children. They kill women. The scum. Give me the gun, and I'll kill them like dogs—ta-ta-ta-ta." I am sure he knows that I am Jewish. I am sure that he feels that I am not "ours" like a dog senses a strange different smell. Whenever he gets drunk, he comes into the kitchen, and if I am there, he starts gritting his teeth and asking for a machine gun. He hates Jews, but he hates all intellectuals with equal intensity. (Chertkova 1985:18)

Because of the shortage of apartments in Leningrad, Stella Chertkova had little choice but to remain in her communal apartment. In some cases, those who had access to apartments or even to individual rooms had more flexibility. Through complicated systems of exchanges some individuals bought and sold condominiums and traded rental apartments. According to Zoya Kramer, people made "under the table" arrangements including both cash and apartments in order to move to larger apartments or to other parts of the country.

If finding and maintaining adequate housing was a constant irritant, daily shopping for sufficient food and reasonably priced clothing was a trial that affected all people in the U.S.S.R., regardless of nationality. Periodic shortages, rude sales people, antiquated shopping procedures, and long lines of hostile shoppers made the lives of women in particular tedious and physically difficult. David Vilensky from Chemelnitsky in the Ukraine described a typical shopping trip.

> They don't have anything that you want in the store. People were mad. We didn't have summer. We didn't have winter, [or the seasonal difference in selection that one might expect in "the breadbasket" of the Soviet Union]. We had all year the same nothing. For example, my sister

> shops for butter. She stays in line a couple of hours. The saleswoman gives her small pieces of butter for one person. This is after 5 o'clock, and she has worked eight hours. In another store you can find a piece of meat. You stay one hour in a big line, and then you go to another store. You finished your job at 5 o'clock. You come home 10 o'clock. Mostly women's job, this shopping.

People bought what was available and made do. They stood in line even when they were not sure of what the store was selling. Frequently they were disappointed after several hours of waiting when the sales people announced that everything had been sold out. Nonetheless, those with more money and the right connections have always been able to make purchases "under the table."

Compounding the general difficulty in obtaining material resources of every kind was ethnicity, which has always corroded the daily interactions between individuals and groups (cf. Smolor 1971:24). Shopping, therefore, became an even greater ordeal for those with "Jewish faces." Says Raisa Nisinova:

> Kiev was very anti-Semitic It was everywhere. I will never forget one incident. I was standing in a line for four hours by the time my turn came. I said I wanted four herrings, and somebody turned around and said, "Well, you Jews will buy them all out. Aren't two enough for you?" I was eleven years old and I hadn't done anything! I just looked Jewish, and I was buying herring, which is considered to be Jewish food. It's Russian food, but Jewish people like it more. I just dropped the whole herring there and said, "I don't need this," and ran home crying. I cried for two days and said, "Mom, what did I ever do to them?"

For many Jews, however, these exasperating, annoying, and time-wasting aspects of daily life were but minor irritants in light of the constant battle to maintain their self-respect in an anti-Semitic world and to continue the all-consuming quest for education and appropriate employment for themselves and their children. Following the Six Day War when some Jews began to reinterpret their personal struggles in terms of the new political awareness, a new trend began to emerge. For the first time since the consolidation of Communism under Stalin in the post-Revolutionary period, Jews began to initiate political demands on a system that historically had done little to ameliorate the situation for them.

The Politicization of Soviet Jewry

In the early days of the new Soviet state, many Jews had assumed that the more politically active among them would take their places within the power structure. It has long been evident, however, that Jews have rarely been welcome in the upper echelons of the Communist Party, a fact that has curtailed the consolidation of Jewish political power and has kept Jews as a group from benefiting from the new order (Pinkus 1988:182). That political inclusion never transpired to any significant degree was a great disappointment for many despite the socioeconomic gains made by individuals. While a few Jews had occasionally wielded considerable political power, by the 1970s those times were long past[5] and the Jews were, as they had been in the Russian Empire, virtually powerless. The only handle they had as a group on the Soviet system was the ability to marshal outside Jewish and Western publicity and political pressure to try to force the Soviet Union to release those who wanted to emigrate (cf. Sachar 1990:625). Despite the connections between prominent Jewish refuseniks and the Western world, few ordinary Jews were aware of this pressure point and so did not band together to exploit this single political resource. Most Soviet Jews were also unaware that Western Jews were pressing the Soviet government to allow free emigration nor did they realize that they were being romanticized as Jewish martyrs. To most people there seemed little point in engaging in political behavior, which had the potential for harming themselves and would not change the system (cf. Paul and Jacobs 1981:107).

While nonconforming politics and political activism were not a part of the lives of most people and were certainly not approved by the government, according to Shmuel Fein, an engineer from Odessa, critical analysis among trusted friends—generally after a good meal and some vodka—was more common. "In the Soviet Union, people were discussing politics a lot. You discussed but were not involved. No, not involved. No!"

Although all of those participating in this study had been members of the Young Pioneers as children and then of the Young Communist League (Komsomol) as teenagers, later many tried to avoid the complications of joining the Communist Party. Those who had friends or relatives who were members characterized them as naive, trying to increase their economic opportunities or attempting to protect themselves in other ways. At the same time, the political pressure to conform was unrelenting, frequently making life at work more difficult for those who chose to remain unaligned (cf. Rothchild 1985:199–201). Shmuel Fein, for example, refused to become involved.

> One hundred percent of kids had to be in the Young Communist League. When you are fourteen years old, you have to go. I know only one guy who was never in the Young Communist League, but after college some dropped out. My wife started to work and forgot she was in the Young Communist League. Because after college I went to a military factory; I could not tell them I was not a member. They were going to send me as chief engineer to a political farm. When I refused, they kicked me off the Young Communist League. I decided I was never going into any politics. Of course, if I had become a member of the Communist Party, I could have had

> a much better job or they could have used my involvement to push me to do something that they wanted!

Like Shmuel Fein, Nicolai Eyot, also an engineer, found himself under pressure at work to join the Communist Party.

> I joined because I was in danger of losing my job. This was true, especially if you had a good position. I was organizing different things on a social basis, and I was a good worker and had the respect of people. [Being a Party member] made your life easier as far as advancement, but I refused. I said I was not good enough to be a member, so they left me alone. I resisted probably for about four or five years until they finally said, "Do you understand what you are doing? It's now the fourth or fifth time we are pushing you. It tells us something. Either you are anti-Soviet or you're anti-Communist. This is an honor, and you are refusing it." They didn't say it in exactly those words, but I could lose my job. Sometimes departments got rid of people because they were constantly refusing to join the Party. I don't think I really had a choice.
>
> You applied, and for a year you are not a full member of the Communist Party. You are on probation. They see how you do things and whether you deserve to be a member. They watch you. During this year, I watched them too, very closely! I was some kind of a naive individual; I believed in the system! After I was intimately involved in all those Party activities and talked to people who were members for many years—when they could say at the meeting one thing and then go after the meeting and say an absolutely different thing—they showed me their real faces. That year was crucial in my life. I changed my attitude to such an extent that I started hating them, and when that year passed and I was supposed to apply again for full membership, I talked to one of the guys who gave me a recommendation. He was a Jew as a matter of fact. I said, "I can't do it." He said, "Are you crazy? Do you want to bury yourself alive? I never heard such a story that somebody after one year of probation refused to join!" He meant I could not work. I couldn't imagine what they would do to me for refusing. It was the early seventies, not a good time to be a dissident. Oh, no, no, no! That's why I joined!

If the negative attitude expressed by Nicolai Eyot and Shmuel Fein toward involvement in the Communist Party was widespread among contemporary Jews, this lack of investment in an official system characterized by endemic anti-Semitism and the fact that the Jewish population was small and scattered explains why Jews as a group never gained a political base in the Soviet Union.

According to the informants for this study, under the pressures of the post–Six Day War period, four political behavioral patterns emerged for Jews in the

U.S.S.R. The first pattern was that of political activism, which elicited the most extreme behavior on the part of those demanding to leave and generated the most hostile reaction from the authorities. As individuals generally not integrated into Soviet society nor into contemporary Jewish culture, such as it was (Gitelman 1988:27), the activists most frequently focused on personal freedom—often expressed in terms of religion, secular ethnicity, Zionism, or a combination of these. Eventually this innovative aggregate of dissenters coalesced into a fluid group that forced itself onto both Soviet and world consciousness and forged the way for subsequent emigration. Nonetheless, this group was minuscule compared to the large numbers who remained silent. Says Israeli Nehemia Levanon of Nativ, the Liaison Bureau (to Soviet Jewry) of the Prime Minister's Office, "The mass of Jews were very different from the refuseniks and activists with whom Jews from the West met (1999:82).

The second pattern was made up of those who also felt a resurgence of Jewish identity but to a lesser degree. These were more private than the activists, becoming public only when they were forced to do so to obtain emigration documents. Combined with a nascent religious or secular ethnic identity was the enormous internal pressure to choose wisely, particularly for the benefit of the children. Had they been accepted on a par with other nationalities and permitted the same degree of cultural expression, many would probably never have come to the critical point of separation from their homeland. Since they believed that the Soviet power structure—left to its own devices—would never improve the situation for Jews, they began to risk opting for change through the appropriate channels.

Those falling into the third pattern[6] were determined to hold onto their gains without risking change. Although they may also have felt the resurgence of positive Jewish identity and the reflected glory from the Israeli victory in 1967, they were either confident of a Soviet future or were too afraid for their own personal safety and their careers to make changes.

The fourth disparate group[7] was not interested in Jewish life at all or in becoming involved in public displays. They had become Soviet Men and women with interests, loyalties, and families, which transcended what they perceived as the narrow world of ethnicity.

By 1970 those applying to leave risked being fired from their jobs, brought to trial, and harassed formally by government officials or informally by coworkers, neighbors, and others or of becoming refuseniks. Still, they persisted, becoming role models—or terrible examples—for other potential emigrants. Meanwhile, individuals and loosely organized groups began to circulate petitions, demanding freedom to emigrate to Israel. In a critical break with previous behavioral patterns, they openly signed their names, addresses, ages, and occupations. It is evident also that these relatively young, highly skilled protesters were aware of the lack of sympathy for their plight within the Soviet government because, of the 220 petitions sent between 1968 and 1970, only 20 percent went to Soviet officials with approximately 32 percent going to Israel, 25 percent to the United Nations, and 23 percent to other non-Soviet personalities (Korey 1973:273).

In December 1970 a group of eleven defendants, nine of them Jewish, was tried in Leningrad for conspiring to hijack an airplane to fly to Israel and was charged with treason. Mark Sidur, a religious Zionist, living in Moscow at the time, remembers the political trials and resultant propaganda.

> It was very negative publicity. It said that they were criminals. They put at risk the lives of so many people for their selfish reasons. Of those people I knew, 50 percent said they were right, and 50 percent said it was a stupid thing to do. It was doomed from the very beginning [and endangered other Jews by association].

The seriousness of the charge focused world attention on the trial, and there was an international outcry when two of the defendants, Mark Dymshitz and Edward Kuznetsov, were sentenced to death for treason and a third, Yosef Mendelevitch, to a "strict regime" sentence of twelve years. Eventually, all of the sentences were commuted, but it was not until 1980 that Mendelevitch, the final member of the group to remain incarcerated, was allowed to emigrate to Israel. What is striking about the participation of Kuznetsov—in direct contrast to those who wanted to disappear into the more favored nationalities—is that he was the son of a mixed marriage and registered as a Russian on his passport although he had tried unsuccessfully to change his designation to "Jew" (Korey 1973:319–20)

In the aftermath of these and other trials in Leningrad, Kishinev, and Riga between 1970 and 1980, foreign public opinion eventually forced Leonid Brezhnev to retreat from this policy if he wished to continue negotiating trade and arms agreements with the west (Gitelman 1988:276). In addition to the continual pressure of conflict in the Middle East, the chief international factor affecting emigration policy was the increased political clout of American Jewry which adopted freedom of religion and the Jackson-Vanik Amendment's linkage of U.S. foreign aid benefits with exit visas as critical concerns (Perle 1994:1; cf. Peele [sic] 347–55; Talisman 355–59 in Simons 1988; Sachar 1993:911–19). Even so, apart from those dissidents who maintained forbidden personal contacts with foreigners, Soviet Jews across the country had little, if any, knowledge of the political pressure and media campaign taking place on their behalf in the West.

Meanwhile, as a part of this new activist trend, small numbers of Soviet Jews in large cities began to meet with others to reinforce the positive feelings generated by the Six Day War. These unprecedented public demands for freedom of religious and political expression within the Soviet Union and for permission to emigrate touched the general Jewish population in two ways. While some began to consider the possibilities of creating meaningful Jewish lives in the U.S.S.R. or emigrating as publicized by the activists, the majority of Jews remained publicly silent, ignoring the turmoil or discussing the possibility of change only with close friends or family.

Among the most extreme cases illustrating the first behavior pattern was that of Anatoly Sharansky (1988),[8] one of the imprisoned Jewish leaders known in the foreign media as the Prisoners of Zion (Gilbert 1984:150, 155–56). Reviled by the Soviet press, the young computer programmer became the symbol of the religious-activist trend in Soviet Jewish life and the focus of Western pressure on the Soviet government to open emigration for those who wanted to reclaim a positive Jewish identity. Once refused by the authorities, Sharansky became even more politically active, meeting with other dissidents privately in apartments and publicly on the hill opposite the Moscow synagogue, a symbolic site routinely monitored by the KGB. He took part in protests and teach-ins with such internationally known scientific luminaries as Andrei Sakharov,[9] defied the KGB when they questioned him about his activities, organized press conferences, and met with foreign journalists. Imprisoned, interrogated for sixteen months, put on trial, convicted, and eventually sent to the Gulag, where he was often in solitary confinement, Sharansky refused to cooperate in any way with the authorities, demanding throughout to go to Israel. Although Sharansky was released—thirteen years after he had first applied to leave—as part of a spy trade with the United States, the U.S. denied that he had ever been an American spy. Dina Alexander, one of the few people immigrating to Hartford who had been politically active as a refusenik during the 1970s, felt a particular kinship with Sharansky.

> One day we were petitioning, and Sharansky's mother was there petitioning to be allowed to see him more than once in two months. I walked in with her letter. The official read it: "Since when are you Sharansky's petitioner?" Then I took the letter out, and the next woman walked into the room with the same letter. We all carried it back and forth. He got mad, but he gave her an audience. She was not successful in getting to see her son that time.

Based upon her own experiences and those of the people she knew, Dina believes that Sharansky's ordeal, while much more extreme than most, accurately reflected the reality of the times. Nevertheless, many Soviet Jews later reported that at that time they either did not know of his plight or that they were too frightened to emulate his demands. Despite the fact that this claim of ignorance was still the most common behavior pattern for Jews in the U.S.S.R., Dina never believed that Jews were unaware of Sharansky nor of the struggle he symbolized.

> They could have known if they had wanted to. There were people who didn't know there was Hitler! We choose not to know, and we will not know. They were just like most people, which means they wanted just to survive. They didn't have the desire to live honorably. You've got an education. You can read. Ask yourself a question: Is there a world outside of where

> you are? If you want that information, there was always the Voice of America in Russian. There was always the Free World radio station, not very easy to get, but people who were curious, who wanted to know, who wanted to find answers to those questions, could do so.

Zoya Kramer, a mathematician in Leningrad during this period, is less sure that the majority of the Jews knew about the dissident movement because of their inherent distrust of the media where propaganda was endemic. People were confused about the accuracy of reported "facts" despite the name of a prominent newspaper, *Pravda,* which translates as "truth." There was a joke in the U.S.S.R. that played with the names of the two major newspapers: There is no news in the "Truth" and no truth in the "News." Says Zoya Kramer,

> They did not give us the true perspective on anything in Soviet life. There was one life in the papers, and there was another life in reality. Everyone was so used to it that it was taken as normal. We didn't trust anything, and the way they depicted our life in the media was how we were striving to be. It's almost like this was the ideal that we were trying to approach so we had to pretend that it already existed. It was double-speak!

This awareness that anything promoted by an official institution and publicized by the media would probably be distorted made it almost impossible for people not in the center of an activity to know that something out of the ordinary was taking place. Clearly it was difficult for many Jews to make decisions based on what they assumed was inaccurate information. Zoya continues:

> There was nothing about dissidents in the media at all. Even names like Sakharov did not appear at that time. Whenever there were trials, they did publish something in the newspapers. Of course it was very derogatory. For instance, right after Khrushchev was dismissed, they had a trial for Sinyavsky and Daniel.[10] That was in the papers, and there was the trial of Brodsky[11] in Leningrad. Everyone was denouncing him, but nobody knew what he was writing about! Oh, we never did believe newspapers about the individuals; it was obvious that there were lies.

Despite the negative publicity about the arrests and trials of the refuseniks and dissidents, the gatherings outside the synagogue in Moscow, private Hebrew classes, and clandestine study groups continued. Nevertheless, many Jews remained isolated, uninvolved in this public resurgence of Jewish consciousness. Shmuel Fein does not believe that there was any comparable Jewish activist movement in Odessa.

> It was too dangerous. If you are in Moscow, you have many more possibilities to be involved because you could meet a lot of people from the

> United States, from different countries, and everybody knows you. But in Odessa, not many people came from the United States, and they could do with you anything they wanted, and nobody would know where you were. To be active was too dangerous.

Shmuel Fein exemplifies the second behavioral pattern, which was characterized by a cautious, rational examination of the Soviet system, the impact of the activist movement on the Jews, and the incentives offered by life in other countries. Not only did he make no effort to find a dissident group, but he protected himself and his family by maintaining a distance from any type of organized group activity, including the Communist Party. Nonetheless, Shmuel, his wife, and members of their extended family began to discuss among themselves plans that would lead to their emigration in 1979.

Since Rosa and Simon Lurie of Kiev were as circumspect and private as the Feins in Odessa, it was not until they prepared to emigrate that they discovered a Zionist group in their city. Even so, they did not become active in Jewish circles until after they arrived in Hartford.

> We begin to organize our own leaving. Then we started to meet people. We didn't know that in the city of Kiev was some organization where people learned Hebrew. Then we went one time to a house of one refusenik. There were maybe fifty to sixty people in that house, all speaking in Hebrew. We felt that we lost a lot [by not participating in Jewish life], but we were working. We just didn't know what was going on around us.

The third pattern of behavior was that of uninvolvement with potential change. Based on the events recorded in the collective memory, many Jews were justifiably afraid of retaliation and often pleaded with family members not to expose them to governmental wrath. Some were actively resistant, refusing to sign required emigration documents for children or divorced spouses, attempting to hide the fact that relatives were leaving, or joining the Communist Party. Since it was common knowledge that real success in the Soviet world has always been linked to Party membership, it is not surprising that some Jews were willing to trade what many considered to be a dubious identification for protection against the guilt by association that occurred when emigrating family members or close friends were branded as traitors. Says Dina Alexander:

> There was one fellow who was a Jew and probably now is a big shot. I pulled him aside at my birthday party and said I am emigrating. He got so scared that later on he joined the Party and become an official. Everybody thought that [a friend's application to leave could affect them and their careers] because they were associating with you.

Dina, however, believes that the real reason that many chose not to consider emigration as an alternative during this period was because they believed the

Communist propaganda promising a glorious future. As far as she is concerned, there is no question that these false guarantees held back huge numbers, including most of her family, from applying to emigrate in the 1970s. Dina had no patience with those who were too frightened to ferret out the truth and to act in their own best interests. In her calculation, temporary harassment and discomfort were small prices to pay for the ultimate freedom of becoming a free Jew with a positive self-image.[12]

> They allowed themselves to be brainwashed and to believe that socialism guaranteed something, that there was some kind of promise. As you mature, if you read books, there comes a time in your life that you understand that there is no guarantee anywhere. How can anybody guarantee that I will not get cancer or I will not lose whatever I have in a fire? There's loss inherent in living.

The fourth pattern was composed of those who had invested so much in the Communist system that it was neither possible for them to identify with the reviled Jewish masses nor to consider emigration. It is evident that many Jews who rejected their label had adapted to the cultural patterns of the dominant society and had become part of many Soviet primary institutions, with some marrying spouses of more favored nationalities, particularly Russian. Because of the unreliability of statistics in the U.S.S.R. and the lack of any hard data,[13] this last assumption is based on the impressions of the Soviet Jews themselves and on those of the agencies (in the early 1990s) that assisted them in their resettlement in the United States and Israel (Stangler and Shaplen 1991:51–52). Since the children of intermarriages may choose at age sixteen to register either as Jews or to take the nationality of the non-Jewish parent, it is impossible to calculate how many such children there are or to track their movement into mainstream Soviet society. However, it is reasonable to assume that those who did not identify themselves or their children as Jews on their documents, did not do so in any other meaningful way.[14]

It was also common knowledge although it was probably a rare behavior pattern—again with no statistical data to support it—that some Jews "lost" their passports or paid to have their documents altered to remove the Jewish nationality label (Korey 1973:169). Overall, however, most Jews—including many who would eventually apply to emigrate when the political climate changed—chose to remain anonymous during this period without changing their official designations, attempting to blend into the mainstream and ignoring the innovations that threatened to upset their carefully constructed lives.

In contrast to the Jewish activists before the Revolution who had participated in many of the popular political groups determined to force an unresponsive government to reform, even the most political Jews of the post-1967 era were not involved in the politics of the Soviet Union itself. By the late 1960s and early

1970s, the main goal of the majority was to pursue personal intellectual freedom, to express religious or secular ethnic identity, and to emigrate. As in the past, only small numbers were visible, but the impact of the modern activists was enormous. Despite the hardships endured by the refuseniks, people were encouraged by the increasing numbers of visas the government was granting.

That the politically active innovators created a new positive ethnic—and in some cases religious—identity for themselves is clear. Although they were unable to disseminate their fervor in toto because of the historical alienation of many Jews from the positive aspects of Jewish identity and because of the difficulty in transmitting accurate information about their demands and successes throughout the Soviet Union, they initiated two new strategies. They forced people to think about themselves in new positive ways, and they served as models of political activism, illustrating that individuals—particularly if they banded together—could force the Communist system to change its long-standing policy and permit large numbers of Jews to emigrate. Even those Jews who lived farthest away from the center of political activity in such cities as Fergana in Uzbekistan and Karaganda in Kazakhstan or were the most resistant to identifying themselves even as nominal Jews—the intermarried and Party members—began to mull over the concept of change. Twenty years later this trend would develop into the largest wave of emigration since the 1920s.

6

Jewish Identity

> They are very sophisticated, especially in the Ukraine where we used to live, very sophisticated anti-Semites. People in general hated the Jews, not only when it was tough to get jobs, but they just looked at us and started telling anti-Semitic jokes. There was a joke in Russia: Some Jewish guy is running away, and he said to his friend, "Let's go! Let's go! There's a pogrom!" The other guy says, "So what? By my passport I'm Russian." And his friend says, "It won't be by what's on your passport, but what's on your face!" So, I felt different. I always felt that I'd like to live in society that didn't care who I was. We were treated like second- or third-rate citizens.
>
> —Boris Akselrod

Ethnic Ambivalence

Despite the growing political enlightenment following the Six Day War and the strengthening of the silent, emotional tie to Israel, the all-encompassing religious Judaism of the past was dead and would never be revived under the Soviet system. Before the Revolution—and for contemporary religious Jews outside the U.S.S.R.—Judaism has always been an intertwining of religious belief, prescribed behaviors, and a positive ethnic identity expressed in terms of community. These elements had long been broken apart and desiccated under Soviet pressure, leaving only a vague yearning by some for a positive Jewish identity with its connections to the wider Jewish world.

The critical trends affecting all religion in the Soviet Union—but most particularly for Judaism—have been the imposition of serious limitations on religious institutions and the denigration and ridiculing of belief and believers by the Communist Party, creating, over time, a generally negative perception of religion. A typical example of the anti-Jewish propaganda appeared in *Robotchi Put* (Labor's Way) (quoted in Goldberg 1961:307–309), denouncing the individual by name for attending synagogue, where he was believed to be involved in prayer, and accusing him of "the embezzlement of moneys collected from wor-

Wm. Carey Int'l University

shipers of the minyan [prayer group] for the erection of a prayer house" and the distribution of chocolates provided by an Israeli diplomat. His daughters, who were also specifically named and their places of employment given, were taken to task and publicly ridiculed for not controlling this antisocial behavior.

For Jews, this hostility toward religion and the people associated with it, was carried to the extreme, resulting in the complete dismantling of Jewish religious, educational, and cultural life. With Communism as the central rallying point for the society, there was little room for belief in an intangible deity and little patience with those who persisted in resisting the Soviet system (Goldberg 1961:244–45). Mark Sidur, one of the few Orthodox Jews to emigrate to Hartford, reflected on the situation as he remembers it.

> In the former Soviet Union, being religious meant one of two things. Either you were an idiot and you didn't know any better or you were trying to gain something by it: to find the right connection or to meet the right girl. Nobody, very few, believed that you could be religious because you needed it; for religion was something really wicked. In the United States being religious is a positive thing. If you know that your daughter is dating a young man and he goes to synagogue, it characterizes him positively. In the Soviet Union, it was just the opposite.

Because of the antireligious climate and the constant barrage of propaganda against religion, it has always been difficult for individuals—particularly for those born after the Revolution—to hold onto a faith that offers little, if any, community support and is almost impossible to learn about. With no religious books or materials published between 1917 and 1958, when five thousand copies of a prayer book were printed (Goldberg 1961:299), it is not surprising that people have not even been able to learn privately, the only avenue for religious education since the decimation of the religious school system in the 1920s (Fishman 1995:251). Additionally, even when Soviet Jews had access to contemporary Jewish cultural materials, many believed that the few publications and other vestiges of Yiddish life were propaganda intended for foreign consumption. According to Alla Rozina, it was much easier and certainly less dangerous not to pursue a religion that made a difficult life even less pleasant.

> From the time that I was born and from what I heard around, all religion was bad. It was not smart, and you shouldn't believe. It was our government. Of course, with the Jewish people, it was much worse. There was no way for me to go to the synagogue even if I had wanted to do it. When you go to school, they tell you that it is a shame to do this. You must have a very strong belief inside to this, but I didn't have this.

For many Jews, religious belief has been replaced by a pragmatic acceptance of the Jewish label as a national designation. Says Sonya Silber, from Chernigov in the Ukraine:

> We are Jewish because they labeled us. We grew up without religion. My family was not religious, still Jewish but by nationality. This is different than in America. In America being Jewish is a religion, but in Russia it is a nationality so everybody knows what you are. Parents try to [make the Jewish label more positive], of course, even without religion. Our parents said that we were smart. Being Jewish was like a kind of family blood but was not religion.

Despite the popular acceptance of atheism, some Soviet Jews still felt ambivalent about the existence of God even though they rarely, if ever, expressed it through religious practice. Masha Dubinskaya from Kiev articulates this vestigial religious consciousness.

> I didn't have any religion, but one day when we decided to leave, I sat on the corner of my bed as my husband slept. I sat there and said, "Oh, God, if you're somewhere, please help." I don't believe it. I am an atheist, but somewhere inside my mind, somebody's supposed to be.

Remnants of Behavior

Although religious belief is impossible to monitor, religious practice is relatively easy to proscribe. With the Soviet power structure forbidding compliance with the laws regulating Jewish life, Jews were separated—some more willingly than others—from the behaviors that had previously defined their daily lives. Because proper behavior has always been a salient aspect of religious commitment for Jews, the degree of separation from Jewish practice becomes a critical measure for assessing the survival of Judaism as a religion as opposed to its being an ethnic designation without a religious component. This ban on religious life, particularly for Jews, has been enforced through a system of ubiquitous spies, punishments ranging from petty retaliation at work to large-scale purges, and unrelenting anti-Semitism. Certainly the limitations on Jewish education, cultural expression, and community religious practice have significantly reduced the level of Jewish observance. In addition, choices made by Jews under pressure in the early years after the Revolution have now matured, with each succeeding generation living more secular lives, farther from the collective memory of the Yiddish language, synagogue attendance, and the knowledge of the rituals, holidays, and life-cycle observances. Although Yiddish was not the language of prayer for men,[1] it had been the ethnic language of daily discourse, analysis of Hebrew texts, and of other religious discussions. For those who wanted to move into the Soviet world, the speaking of Yiddish as the main vehicle of communication was one of the first specifically Jewish behaviors to be jettisoned as a barrier to socioeconomic assimilation. The experience of Michael Charney was typical.

> My parents understood Yiddish because my grandparents on my mother's side spoke Yiddish with each other. Both my mother and my father understood it, but they didn't speak it between themselves, and they didn't speak it to me. But they understood some Yiddish jokes, and I could understand a few words here and there.

Even though Simon and Rosa Lurie from Kiev had grown up in religious families before the Revolution, they never attended synagogue during their working years. Rosa believed that the system made people afraid to attend services, although Christians who wanted to go to church felt freer than Jews to do so. After Simon retired, he decided that he had reached a point where he could make his own choices without fear of serious retribution. "Six, seven years I was retired before we emigrated, I went Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur," he says.

Although Alla Katzman Rozina was aware of neighbors who gathered to pray, her family was not as brave as the elderly Simon Lurie.

> Old people who tried to keep the tradition sometimes went to somebody's house, but my father didn't go. He kept it inside. He left usually home at six or seven o'clock in the morning, and he was back at seven o'clock in the evening. He worked so hard, he just couldn't do this. My father said he was ashamed to be Jewish. Everybody said it was something to be ashamed of. It was a bad feeling, and they were afraid about themselves and afraid about their children.

As a part of the repressive campaign against the Jews, synagogues were closed and the buildings confiscated. Some were left to deteriorate while others were transformed into theaters, warehouses, and, in Odessa, into a museum of natural history (Gitelman 1988:167; Rothchild 1985:42). Leonid Silber, who was a child in the 1950s, remembers the end of the already-reduced synagogue life in Chernigov.

> My two uncles and my father on big holidays came together, and they prayed and celebrated everything the way it's supposed to be. My father died in February 1951, and then in 1952 they closed the synagogue in our town, and it never opened. Never! We didn't celebrate [at synagogue after that].

By the 1970s so many synagogues had been closed or were kept under such hostile surveillance that attendance at services was completely outside the experience of most Soviet Jews. Says Dina Alexander:

> In Moscow there was a synagogue, but we never went near it. First of all nobody in their right mind went there because it was almost like going out and enlisting in the anti-Soviet list of undesirables. Secondly, I was not

> religiously educated. I wouldn't even know what to do there, and I didn't think it was a place for me anyway. We didn't know who went there.

Like Dina Alexander, Michael Charney knew about the synagogues in his city of Lvov, but they played no part in his family life—a national trend that escalated as synagogue attendance was increasingly monitored by the KGB.

> There are some synagogues around, but the attendance at those synagogues is watched so closely during every High Holidays. I think that every time they had a service there would be people standing outside the synagogues and writing down who was walking into them. That was true about any religion. If you were caught attending services and you were under the age of sixty or seventy, they would notify your work, your parents' work, and they would notify the school. That would get you in trouble, one way or another, and it was true about any religion.

Nick Eyot described the type of harassment he saw on his first visit to the Moscow synagogue on the holiday of Simhat Torah. By that time in the mid-1970s this synagogue and this holiday in particular had become the center of political activity, international publicity, and a focus for government interference. Dina Alexander, Mark Sidur, and Anatoly Sharansky—all at different times—visited this synagogue or the hill opposite where refuseniks and dissidents gathered as part of their protests and desire for solidarity (cf. Sanders 1988:601).[2]

> First you see some very quiet people here and there. They don't smile; they don't sing. They watch, look around. They are everywhere. And here comes another surprise—a lot of traffic along this narrow street. At the usual time there is no traffic at all. But what they do during the Holy Days is they close a parallel street that usually carries the traffic so all traffic comes here. Drivers yell, signal. Some of them do not understand why they have to go on this street, but some of them understand what's going on, and again you hear the words [anti-Semitic epithets]. And now the quiet people come. It looks like they want to speed up traffic. They say, "Please free the street. Let traffic go through." But they are on the lookout. Then somebody from the crowd says, "Don't hinder us. Let us celebrate our holiday" or something like that. At the same moment he is grabbed, taken away and nobody sees him this night anymore. They call it "disorderly conduct." They try to intimidate people. Here and there people are taken away. If they don't argue with the agents, they will be freed later this night. But if they do, there is a special punishment: three to fifteen days in jail. Sometimes you meet a man you work with. He's not a Jew. You ask him what he's doing here. He's confused and mumbles something. You know he's a stool pigeon. You may be sure there will be a new entry in your record, not to your benefit. Who knows how it may affect your future life. But it doesn't matter any more.

With synagogue attendance essentially moribund, religious practice was forced to center entirely within the home. After the closure of the Chernigov synagogue in 1952, for example, Leonid Silber's mother continued to keep a traditional Jewish home as best she could.

> My mother celebrated Passover her own way. She bought some matzo under the table because legally you could not buy. It was very hard. She was a woman who was keeping Yom Kippur and fasting one day. She kept in touch with old people, and she always kept the Jewish calendar. She knew every *Yarzheit* [anniversary of a relative's death], and she lit candles.

Even this modest observance became more difficult for the Silbers as the production of matzo was severely restricted and after 1964 permitted for only three religious groups in Moscow, Leningrad, and Tiflis. Those baking matzo at home or acquiring it from abroad were in danger of serious reprisals (Pinkus 1988:290). Even if Jews were able to obtain the essential foods or ritual objects for proper observance, hostile neighbors might report them to the authorities or their own children tattle at school. Thus, many parents were unwilling to allow religious relatives to pass on their knowledge of Judaism and religious life to the children. Raisa Nisinova's parents decided to keep the children ignorant and safe.

> My grandmother was the only one who really had feelings with religion. She had a Jewish holiday calendar, and she would observe all the holidays. She would do everything in religion. She would light candles, but not on a regular basis except for holidays. On the holidays my grandmother cooked certain foods. I know that if it was Passover, we had matzo. She was keeping very religious in her own home but was never allowed to talk to us about it.

Dina Alexander's mother was also very cautious in what she said to her children.

> First of all it was not that wise [to talk openly about religion to the children. When] you bring up children in the Soviet Union, you have to be very careful. You want to make sure that whatever it is that you teach them, they don't turn around and give you away. This was the only religious education or feeling that I had: number one, I knew I was a Jew. I knew it early in my life, and I knew that I would have it hard and that for me to survive I needed to do certain things. That was my Jewish, negative-Jewish, education I call it, the pressures of the outside. The other thing was that on Passover we always had Passover food. My mother knew how to make gefilte fish and matzo.

As the formerly observant generations who had grown up in the small villages or the Jewish neighborhoods of the large cities died, their children and grandchildren learned little about Judaism, and that little was rarely positive. Even if those parents would have chosen to teach their children about Judaism and Jewish lifeways, the handful of elderly rabbis who served the entire Soviet Union were unable to provide any meaningful education (Gitelman 1988:119). Thus, by the 1970s, the trend was clear: formal Jewish education at all levels including rabbinical seminaries, which would have educated religious teachers, and leaders had been suppressed, making it all but impossible for succeeding generations to pass on the traditional ways. Informal Jewish education was random and incomplete, available only through relatives who were not afraid to teach the children a few things. Michael Charney learned a little from his grandfather.

> Nothing was formal. My grandfather was educated in the *yeshiva* when he was young, and he had some Hebrew books in his home. Whenever I would go to his home, he would sit down with me. Once in a while he would open a Hebrew book. I knew a few words, and I think this was more than my friends knew. We did not celebrate holidays except my grandfather taught me about Chanukah *gelt* [gifts of money].

Nick Shulman grew up in Chelyabinsk, a large city in the Urals that had been a destination for many of those evacuated during World War II. For Nick and his father, who were musicians, music became the chief mode of Jewish expression.[3]

> My father was born in 1927 in Latvia [which had been annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939]. At that time it wasn't part of Russia, and there were Hebrew schools, religious schools. My father went to religious school. My father actually sang a lot of songs in Yiddish, very famous songs like "*Yiddishe Mama*" and "*Beltz.*" I knew them, and I liked them, and they were inside for a long time.

However, most Jewish education for several generations has been negative. Nicolai Eyot is typical of many Jewish children who formed the nucleus of their Jewish identity through "street talking."

> I was seven years old when I learned I was a Jew. I learned it from the kids I had been playing with on the street. In the course of the arguments, we used to call each other names, which happens everywhere. But at one point I realized they were saying some words I didn't understand. Later my mother gave me the explanation. I went through a lot of situations when I wasn't accepted or couldn't get benefits or I wasn't treated properly or I was denied something others got. The only reason for that was my nationality. For example, at birth I was given the name "David" but I was ashamed of my name. This name is a very rare name nowadays over there, and it belongs

> to Jews mostly. I was trying to hide it. I was a boxer, and I didn't want them to announce, "In the blue corner is David Eyot" because immediately the public would be against me. So I became "Nicolai."

Although Polina Zilberman of Kiev was beginning to create a positive Jewish identity for herself, the stings of anti-Semitism were a critical source of her daughter's information about public life for Jews.

> There are Pioneer camps in Russia for children, where children were sent for the summer when their parents were working and couldn't take care of them. I went to this camp to pick up my daughter, who was sitting alone on the steps of a cafe where they fed the children. She was six years old with a swollen face, and I asked her, "Little one, why you are here alone? What happened?" She got too shy with her mother to tell the truth. This is what happened actually. They pushed her around. They beat her when nobody saw because she had a very pronounced Jewish appearance. She had red hair, and in Russia red hair belongs only to Jews. She had those things all her childhood in Russia, and she was even timid to tell me the reason. I felt like my heart would just go to pieces. I took her home immediately.

Since many Jewish children grew up without any knowledge of the positive aspects of Jewish life and without the support offered by religious belief and community, some became very angry with the pejorative label and attempted to dissociate themselves from it. This response to anti-Semitism, according to Korey (1973), is not unusual as people attempt to protect themselves from "intolerable burdens which, at all costs, must be avoided. . . . [Others] instead of desperately trying to escape the discrimination and the propaganda by repressing their identity . . . try to determine what that identity is, its myriad historical and cultural facts (1973:164–65). Ina Eyot from Moscow saw her son begin to follow the first path as the pervasive anti-Semitism undermined his ability to see himself in a positive light, even though his parents were building positive Jewish identities for themselves.

> To live in that society was very hard to be a Jew. Jews tried to hide it because people were very cruel, and people were very rude. Especially the children didn't want anybody to know they were Jewish because other people treated them so badly. My son was like this. He knew, but he wanted to hide it. That was for children very devastating—for adults too—but for children, very bad.

This alienation of some Jews from even the remnants of beliefs and behaviors coupled with the replacement of the Jewish value system by the socialist world view was congruent with the goals of the Soviet system. Nevertheless, there has always been a second pressure on the Jews, forcing them to remain separate as required by the institutionalized anti-Semitism. Even those who wanted to identify completely with the Soviet world were frequently rejected by the more favored nationalities. Leonid Silber believes that there was so little positive incentive for remaining Jewish in the U.S.S.R. that many would have completely rejected the label of Jew had they not been circumscribed by national registration.

> People were ashamed. I say 98 percent of the people tried to hide they were Jewish. Some people who had the possibility right away changed their nationality, changed their last names, tried to be Russian. If the kids would be Russian, it would be easier. Sometimes it was easier, but sometimes it was the opposite because if Russians find out this, they hate you more.

Ina Eyot's husband, Nicolai, has thought a great deal about the Jews of the Soviet Union and their ability to survive under such hostile conditions.

> There are a few things that identify a person as a Jew in that country. Most important is item Number Five in passports—nationality. But this importance is of two kinds. For you it means you are a second-rate person. For an official to whom you show your passport, it's important because he knows from the very beginning how to treat you. Identification is also by name or the way you look. These are the things that can identify a Jew, and that's about it. We didn't go to Sunday schools, we didn't have a Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah, we didn't go to a synagogue, we didn't know Jewish history, holidays, traditions, even the language. What kind of Jews were we? It looks like we had nothing to do with Jewishness at all. But it's only at first sight. Deep inside we have something that makes us different. A constant hardship of a second-rate people—insults, fights for dignity, insecurity, fears of what may happen to Jews after a regular anti-Semitic campaign—remind us every day who we are. I don't know what would have happened if these factors had not existed. Probably we would have assimilated sooner. This is the way it goes due to mixed marriages and changes in item Number Five in passports, which can be done for money. But these [anti-Semitic] factors exist and force us to develop some kind of internal protest and a feeling of exclusiveness, not the exclusiveness Soviet propaganda condemns in Zionism, but the exclusiveness of people who have been suffering for centuries. This is what helps Soviet Jews to preserve their Jewishness even without synagogues, Jewish religion, and culture.

For those interested in bolstering or in creating a positive identity, self-education became the main route. Individuals began to read, generally in secular books of Jewish interest, and often to discuss Jewish issues with family and close friends. Throughout the 1970s this increasing trend linked Jews to traditional

Jewish values, generated a broadened awareness of Jewish ethnicity, and precipitated new bonds with the wider Jewish world. Sonya and Leonid Silber read whatever Jewish material they could find.

> We read Sholom Aleichem, classics, what was available, Babel[4] [but] he was not writing about religion. In Russia they prohibited him. They did not publish his books. We didn't talk about Jewish things. We didn't know much. Everything was banned.

In Kiev Polina Zilberman was able to find more Jewish information. She and her husband read the forbidden books, articles, and novels (*samizdats*),[5] circulated surreptitiously within trusted circles, and discussed Jewish issues with friends as they began to develop positive Jewish identities.

> When I became a young woman, I started to read books about Jews. I read a lot about Jews in ancient times, in the times of the Romans, and so I became proud of being a Jew because I started to learn how much Jews gave to the world. We wanted to learn more and more about our past, about our present, about Jews who were prominent and gave so much to this world in spite of the way they were treated. Later my husband and I liked to read the literature that was typed or written by hand and was prohibited. If somebody would have found out, we would have paid dearly for this.

Dina Alexander, who has never had much interest in formal religious observance, chose to educate herself in two ways, both of which she considered "Jewish"—her own personal reading on Jewish topics and the use of the Soviet higher education system, which she hoped would bring her into contact with other intellectuals who would overlook nationality labels and question the values of the Soviet system.

> Information was not easy to get, but there were a couple of books that I read that were very impressive. One book was called *I Survived the Ovens,* a memoir of a woman who realized that the fascists were so complacent with the passivity of the Jews that they didn't expect any resistance, [but the author] organized a resistance. I remember that book so clearly because that was the first time I realized that Jews were not passively following into the gas chambers.

By the 1970s several positive steps toward Jewish identification had emerged from the erosion of what had been a complete way of life for more than a thousand years. First was the embracing of a positive Jewish identity as much as was possible, even though only a few items remained within the religious and cultural inventory. For many people only those minimal religious traditions individuals could perform in the heart of the family were left. Says Polina Zilberman:

> I used to live with my grandmother, but she was overwhelmed with all the disasters, and she was happy just to feed us anything. I knew of the existence of [Jewish dietary laws]. We knew about pork and *treif* and nonkosher food, but in Russia, we were lucky to buy anything. My grandmother's older sister, who was really religious and who wasn't afraid anymore of anybody, lived with us for quite a few years, and I remember as a child watching her pray. She would stand in our very small kitchen and light the candles.

Another was the reinterpretation of religious behavior in terms of family tradition, a common theme among those immigrating to Hartford. According to Michael Charney,

> To us religion is tradition insofar as what our grandparents did. Some of the laws of religion are not religious in the sense that they are just there and we must do them without any sense. To us, those laws have a lot of meaning. Like, the *bris* [ritual circumcision] was because of hygiene. The reason Jews don't want to eat pork is because pork had all kinds of diseases associated with it at that time. So, to us, all these things meant something, and that's why we would do them.

The third aspect of this limited but positive Jewish behavior was the new focus on two holidays—Yom Kippur and Passover—as the major, if not the only, significant points in the Jewish year. During the 1970s, Simhat Torah, the holiday celebrating the yearly cycle of Torah reading, took on political overtones for the dissidents and refuseniks as they gathered to reclaim their positive Jewish identities. For most Jews, however, Simhat Torah did not play any part in family life although some knew the name and that it was a joyous holiday, characterized by song and dance.

In Lvov, Yom Kippur and Passover were the only holidays celebrated by Rita and Yaakov Kagan. Just as in many Soviet Jewish homes, their celebrations were not in the traditional style although the Kagans tried to remember how their parents and grandparents had conducted themselves, and they reinterpreted the holidays, which were based on a few symbols, to be personally meaningful in terms of family tradition. Yom Kippur in particular became almost exclusively a family memorial day rather than a day of religious repentance with one section devoted to memories of the dead. Rita remembers, "Yom Kippur, Yaakov did not eat because he remembered that his whole family was killed. His father was killed in Germany, his mother killed by the police, and his brother killed in the war."

Despite sharing Passover with family and friends as their parents had done, the Kagans' celebration was essentially secular. According to Rita, "Pesach, we had matzo. Sometimes from Israel we bought it, but not in the store. Special men and women baked this matzo. People said when to buy it. Sometimes we went to friends and family. Sometimes they came to us." Although they ate some traditional foods for their festive meal, they did not conduct a seder, remember the

Passover story, or understand the symbolism of the matzo which they had made every effort to find. The gathering together and the obtaining of the matzo itself had become the significant acts of Jewish identification.

One aspect of Jewish life the Soviet government could not monitor was the cooking of ethnic foods. It could and did limit the distribution of matzo at Passover and curtail the butchering of meat according to the kosher ritual, but it could not eliminate the Jewish versions of the blintzes, latkes, and borshts coming out of Jewish kitchens. Food shortages, however, and curious neighbors who might report on those keeping kosher limited the Jewish cooks' repertory, thereby altering their cooking patterns. Nevertheless, many Jewish cooks maintained their traditional dishes, frequently tying them to specific times of year even through the holidays associated with them were no longer part of the active cultural inventory. Mark Sidur's family followed this pattern, although by the late 1960s most other traditions had atrophied because his parents were afraid to identify themselves as Jews in any meaningful way.

> While my grandmother on my mother's side was alive, we kept a real Jewish traditional home. She was killed by the Germans. In honor of my grandmother, my mother went on keeping some of the traditions, but because the war was on, we couldn't get kosher meat; we couldn't get any meat at all. Yet, we bought matzos. Mother cooked and baked and made beautiful things, hamantaschen and those good things. We had fasting.

Dina Alexander also felt this culinary connection to her Jewish ethnicity and to a few holidays: "My aunt somehow used to get matzo, and there was that desire to make matzo balls. It's still there. I want to do it. Is this being a real Jew? No. But you want to have some tradition because you know you're a Jew."

Given the incessant negative pressure on the Jews, it is remarkable that so many retained a positive Jewish identity and continued to employ some symbolic behaviors, embrace "family traditions," and view the world through an acknowledged "Jewish" perspective. Supported by intergenerational family solidarity and by tight personal friendship networks composed mainly of other Jews, by the knowledge that they were well-educated, productive workers and dutiful children who became good parents, providing material possessions and educations for their own children, many Jews believed that were living by the old Jewish values and seeing the positive results of their choices and labors. Recognizing their own upward socioeconomic mobility and the advances they had made within the system, they—in turn—considered themselves superior to the "others," whom they stereotyped as ignorant, drunken anti-Semites.

Accepting Ethnic Identity and Shifting to Action

In Communist terms the answer to the question—Who is a Jew?—is simple. A Jew need not be born to a Jewish mother, be circumcised if male, practice the religion, indeed need not know anything about religious beliefs or customs to be identified forever as a Jew. Says Shmuel Fein from Odessa:

> Most important, we were Jews by blood, not by religion because on our passport it was stamped that we were Jewish, and we suffered because we were Jewish. We were scapegoats. It was always this way in the Soviet Union. My opinion is that we are more Jewish than Jews who go to synagogue because if you are persecuted because you are Jewish, you are more Jewish than anybody else.

Stella Chertkova examined and defined her personal identity as a Jew.

> The Jewishness for me was something unspoken, but obvious and clearly understood—as love or hatred or bitterness or joy. Jewishness was not something that could be learned, but something that could only be felt. It was in my blood, in my skin, in my way thinking, in my profound sense of pessimism and bitter sense of humor. It was my pride with Jewish contributions to the world's science, music, and art, regardless whether it depicted Russian landscape or German river. It was in close association and sense of kinship with all the previous and future generations of Jews; in ancient Jerusalem, in medieval Spain, in Polish ghettos and German concentration camps, in the Soviet Union and new Israel. It was symbolized to me by Lion Feuchtwanger and Marc Chagall, Heine and Levitan, Einstein and Mendelssohn, Bizet and Pasternak, Osip Mandelstam. . . . It was in the depth and sadness of unmistakably Jewish eyes. (Chertkova 1985:19, 28)

By the early 1970s three major trends in what remained of Jewish life had developed, all of which took on political overtones as some Jews chose to move beyond the negative designation and take action to become "real Jews," a concept that they defined for themselves. The first group and probably the smallest, although certainly the most visible, were those who had found a new strength in their Jewish identification. They had grappled with the issues of self-identity, their own ability to learn about and then internalize Jewish beliefs and behaviors—in some cases in terms of living traditional Jewish lives—and with the relationship of this burgeoning identity to emigration. Their basic demands were to be allowed to live fully as Jews within the U.S.S.R. or, increasingly, to be permitted to emigrate—particularly in the early years—to Israel. In some cases religious and political activism were tightly linked although some Jewish activists were more oriented toward a positive ethnic identity and/or personal intellectual freedom as nominal Jews without the religious component.

Although few of those who came to Hartford emigrated from the Soviet Union because they wanted to practice Orthodox Judaism, Mark Sidur was one. As a teenager in Moscow, he had begun to explore the limited Jewish life that was available, acted in the only ways open to him, and eventually made his decision to leave based on his need to express his positive identity as an observant Jew.

> I believe that religiosity is something you are born with. It is like a blessing. In my teens I tried to read everything I could find about Jews and Judaism. I went to the Moscow Synagogue.[6] It wasn't really a synagogue, but it gave me some feeling of belonging to something. I didn't do anything because I didn't know how, and I didn't have any Russian *sidurim* [prayer books]. I just stood there and listened, but I felt that this was something that belonged to me. My parents laughed. They understood what I meant, but they were simply afraid to do anything. A lot of foreigners would come to the Moscow synagogue for the holidays, from the American Embassy, from the Israeli Embassy (when there was an Israeli Embassy in Moscow). We were completely forbidden to deal or speak with them, but of course I did. My problem was I lived in Moscow, and Moscow Jews are very different from Jews in the countryside. Jews in the countryside were much more traditional. It was easier for them to stick to the tradition.[7] There were people in Russia who were much more Jewish than I was. I have a friend—he is still in Russia—and he comes from a very rich family by Soviet standards. In his family everything was observed as much as it could be observed in the Soviet Union under those conditions that existed then. I was happy to join in. I felt absolutely stupid. I don't speak Yiddish, and I don't speak Hebrew. I went to the synagogue with my Jewish friends, boys and girls. Most of them left, but some did not. I wanted for a long time to escape to Israel, but I didn't know how.

The second group, unmeasurable but undoubtedly much larger than the first, accepted their designation as Jews in terms of ethnic or national identity virtually devoid of religious content, maintained the vestiges of Jewish behaviors as "family traditions," selected the basic Jewish values of family and education as secularized polestars in their lives, and determined to make their ways as best they could by blending into the mainstream society. Politically this group divided into two parts: those who pressed the authorities for permission to leave but without the ideological fervor of the preceding group and those who were content to remain within the Soviet framework as long as it promised a bright future.

This secular ethnic group also broke into two groups in terms of Jewish behaviors: those who began to behave in specifically Jewish ways—although always within secular Soviet parameters—and those who did not act, yet intensified their intellectual analysis. Both came to the same critical juncture—emigration—as the only solution to retaining or recreating a positive Jewish identity. Illustrative of this first aspect was Nick Eyot who analyzed his personal life and identity and decided to reject the negative public stereotype of a Jew. As he selected from among the aspects of Judaism with which he was familiar, he began to create a new active self-identity.

> One day I said to myself: I happen to be a Jew by birth! All my life I was trying to hide it. I'm tired of fear. Where is my dignity? I'm not worse than any other Russian. Why should I feel myself as a second-rate person only because they put it this way? Enough! From now on I have my own attitude. I want to be a real Jew, not just by passport. I have to start doing something that will restore my respect for myself and will show all of them that I'm not an oppressed Jew any more! Unfortunately, there are not that many things I could do about it. There are no religious schools, books, supplies, no Jewish Federations and community centers. [In the 1970s] the only thing left was the one temple in Moscow. So I said to myself: The next holy day I'm going to synagogue! As luck would have it, the very next holiday was Simchas Torah. I'd heard from older people that it was a merry holiday with songs, dances, and laughing. Excellent! It would be my first holy day in a temple. And I went. Surprises started from the beginning. I'd never seen so many Jews at once. By buses, subway, cars, just walking, old and young, men and women—they rushed in one direction. They joked, they laughed, they even spoke Yiddish. Groups of people flowed into the street where the temple was. I saw smiling faces. People met friends and relatives. I saw young people dancing and singing in groups. I felt something happen inside me. I felt a spasm in my throat, and I didn't even notice tears of joy on my face. Here we are! We're alive! We have our spirit! It's not that easy to destroy our people.

Representing the second aspect of this secular ethnic group behavior was Zoya Kramer, the mathematician from Leningrad. Even though Zoya had never felt much commonalty with Jews in terms of religion or ethnicity, she had been able to create a positive Jewish identity for herself based on her knowledge of Jewish contributions to the world. Nevertheless, she was unwilling for her son to grow up in an atmosphere where he would be forced to cling to a vicarious collective history to retain a positive, personal identity. This intellectual calculation, which she believes stemmed from her Jewish value system, led her to the same conclusion as Nicolai Eyot and propelled her toward a similar action: emigration.

> This feeling of pride came from my family. Partly it was my own way of dealing with discrimination. I think it's natural that you either become suppressed by it or you develop some sort of arrogance in response. I don't think there's anything in between. I think that when you are treated as subhuman, you either learn to despise those who treat you that way or you believe that that's what you deserve. I think that I developed the first reaction. Jews in Russia were very conscious of [the fact that there were successful Jewish people in the world], and I think this was the most important thing in maintaining our self-respect. It's not something I would

> like my son to get. It's not something I am proud of. It's a reaction to being mistreated, and I don't feel that way anymore. I am still proud of being Jewish, but it's a very relaxed, normal feeling now. It was very painful in Russia, so by remembering what Jews gave to the world, I was convincing myself that it was okay to be Jewish. I could look down on people who would ostracize me or insult me.

The third group consisted of those who had decided that Soviet life offered more positive incentives than did Jewish identity. They had assimilated completely into Soviet society, denying their Jewish origins by becoming atheistic Communists, by marrying non-Jews and raising their children in the spouse's nationality, or by purchasing illegal documents that allowed them to disappear into a more desirable group. Not only did they avoid the political upheaval created by those demanding emigration, but many retrenched, solidifying their positions as part of the Soviet mainstream, taking no action during the 1970s to redeem their Jewish identities.[8]

Additionally, by the late 1970s and the early 1980s as more people from the large Russified group began to select emigration as the most viable alternative, a fourth trend emerged. Large numbers had begun to assess the success rate of these applying to leave during the preceding decade and had determined that the risk of being refused had been reduced, that the process was less onerous, and that public condemnation was less harsh now that emigration had become more common. Finally, they were willing to admit publicly that they were Jewish and hope for the best.

Regardless of the fact that a given individual might not be a part of any new movement, the tenor of life for all Jews in the Soviet Union had been disrupted. Assimilated New Soviet Men and women as well as those who chose to display their ethnic identity—with or without its religious expression—were affected by the possibility of emigration. The very fact that increasing numbers—building to a total of approximately 210,000 émigrés in the decade from 1973 to 1983 alone (Stoppleman 1990:1)—had publicly accepted their Jewish label as an asset was an innovation and an acceptance of a more positive self-identity.

The achievement of a satisfactory life under Communism had called for a variety of new responses from all Soviet citizens and from the Jews in particular, making it difficult for the latter to revert to the prescribed world of Jewish laws and ritual. The Soviet Jewish definition of Jew as a national designation was clear and precise yet at odds with that of American Jews who defined the concept in terms of religious content. With few exceptions, those adult Soviet Jews, settling in America, were not and probably never would become religious, observant Jews as understood by Westerners, thereby creating the potential for misunderstanding and conflict with their host communities in the New World.

7

Ethnicity: In the Community, at School, and at Work

> My father went to Hartford just half a year before we emigrated and visited with my uncle, his brother. He came back convinced that life there is much more interesting and promising for people who wanted to accomplish something. It has more opportunity for kids especially. So he encouraged us. When you start looking and if you want to see what's wrong, you find what's wrong. There was no future for my career and my husband's career in the U.S.S.R.
>
> —Irina Greenberg

Remnants of Jewish Community

Just as religious practice has never recovered from the Soviet assault after the Revolution, neither has Jewish community (cf. Markowitz 1993:9). People have been moved and reshuffled for decades, eliminating Jewish residential enclaves and severing community ties. No longer does Judaism provide the main social glue for Jews nor do its institutions provide tangible social benefits. It is the rare family that does not have at least one intermarriage, further attenuating the ties to a communal past. In light of the strengths of the various other ethnic communities whose specific cultural expressions are approved by the Soviet authorities, Jews are acutely aware of their own lack of community and culture. Since they have had little choice but to adopt mainstream—basically Russian—culture, this has become the norm for many. Even the resurgence in Jewish consciousness after the Six Day War failed to bring about a regeneration of community, and only the small fluid group of political activists that had begun to organize developed any sort of community spirit. Although this group was an inspiration for many, it also served as warning of what could happen if one rebelled against the system and drew the attention of the government to the group as a whole.

Vadim Kirtsov describes the Jewish life—of lack thereof—in St. Petersburg (Leningrad[1] under the Communists), one of the largest, most sophisticated cities in the Soviet Union with an estimated Jewish population of 200,000 in the late 1960s (Smolar 1971:14).

> Most of our friends were Jewish. Every Russian Jew knew this rule. If you lived in the city and did any creative work, 50 percent of your friends were Jewish. As far as any formal community, there was not one. There still is one synagogue[2] in St. Petersburg. For certain celebrations of major religious holidays, there were people who attended. If you can call that a community, it is a community, not a community of another sense. Geographically, people are dispersed over the city, and they work for different organizations. Most of the Jews who were well educated were secular first. None of the Jews were really religious. I don't know of any significant [Jewish practice or cultural event] to speak of. I was too young to remember those things, but I was told that on occasion Israeli artists came for a performance or series of concerts. This type of performance gathered large Jewish audiences, more than any gentile orchestra. From time to time one of the major theater companies in the city would stage traditional Jewish plays such as Sholem Aleichem or Mendel Moher Sforim.[3] Anything of that kind would have to pass a whole censorship system, which was established to eliminate Jewish cultural events. To get something like that staged was extraordinary. It almost never happened.

The decimation of community for Soviet Jews entailed more than the loss of the cultural and religious framework. Gone was the dense network of community services: the loan funds, burial societies, schools, hostels for kosher travelers, and agencies distributing charity from abroad (Gitelman 1988:39–40). Not only had the Jews lost the services provided by these institutions, but they were also deprived of the economic and social structures that had coalesced around them in the past. Theoretically, these institutions were no longer necessary in a Soviet world where housing, medicine, education, transportation, and many cultural events were subsidized. Nevertheless, despite the collective philosophy and propaganda of the Soviet Union, the government did not provide a social welfare system for those who did not work or were otherwise outside the mainstream. Says Zoya Kramer:

> There's no welfare stipend in Russia. Even though it's a socialist country, you live your life knowing that if you lose your job, only your friends and your family will support you. Old people have pensions if they worked for the government for a certain number of years. For instance, my grandparents never had pensions, and in their old age they were supported by their children. That is all they had. You are responsible for your family. If you have a child every nine months, you starve.

Without community support, the necessity for individual responsibility separated unrelated Jews from each other, forcing families to turn inward as they allocated their scarce resources to provide for each other during difficult times. As a result of the general mistrust of the system and the fear of being reported to the authorities for anything that neighborhood or workplace informers might perceive as anti-Soviet thought or behavior, Soviet citizens, including the Jews, did not form self-help or mutual-interest groups with outsiders, often trusting only other family members and longtime friends (cf. Paul and Jacobs 1981:141; Kosmin 1990:45). Polina Zilberman, whose family had been decimated by the war, saw her friendship network as a buffer against the rest of the world (cf. Simon 1997:59).

> We talked a lot with our friends. You don't talk with strangers. You can't allow yourself this kind of risk. Fortunately, almost all our friends were Jews. One or two were not Jews, but almost everybody was a Jew because we shared the same experiences, we shared the same treatment, and most of us shared the same problems in being Jews.

One inevitable consequence of the lessening of formal community ties has been the rising number of intermarriages, which has created a basic change in the structure of the Jewish family. In contrast to orthodox religious custom where children marrying non-Jews are mourned as dead, most families have learned to deal with in-laws who come from groups where anti-Semitism has frequently been an integral part of their national identity and its theological underpinnings.

Despite anti-Semitism, social barriers for some individuals have decreased as students attended the same schools, served in the army together, and mixed with others of various nationalities in neutral situations. Since many Jews saw no point in marrying another Jew just to stay within a "community" that scarcely existed, the personal choice of a marriage partner frequently overrode any weak sense of group consciousness. In addition to the personal attachments between individuals, intermarriage frequently offered both partners larger social advantages. Jewish men in particular were reputed to be good husbands and fathers, less inclined to become alcoholics or to beat their wives (Korey 1975:5). The Jewish values of family, education, and working for a brighter future enhanced the desirability of men and women who—as individuals—did not fall prey to the stereotypes of anti-Semitism. Conversely, the advantages stemming from being married to a spouse from a more favored group and the ability to register the children as members of a more desirable nationality were irresistible to some. The fact that the children would not be stigmatized as Jews nor would their lives be circumscribed was very important to those who had little interest in maintaining their own ties to moribund Jewish lifeways. Irina Greenberg's brother made this decision: "His wife is Russian. They have good positions there, good jobs, a much better life than we had. Their daughter was accepted in the university. She was Russian by passport so she didn't have any trouble."

With each new generation increasingly distant from the collective Jewish religious and cultural past, the impetus to stay within the group—which does not offer either an established, supportive community or close blood ties with other Jews—is decreasing. As the elderly who could pass on cultural information to grandchildren of mixed nationalities die and many of those who have some connection with a positive Jewish identity—no matter how slight—emigrate, the Jewish "living bond of generations" (Halbwachs 1980) is disappearing for children of intermarriage. It is probable that those Jews who remain will become increasingly absorbed into the secular world around them or into the nationalities of their intermarried families. Not only has the formal Jewish community disappeared in the Soviet Union, but the family clusters and Jewish friendship networks are decreasing as well, leaving little of Jewish content to be transmitted to further generations.

Shrinking Educational Opportunities for the Children

After the Revolution as Jews took advantage of the opportunities available to them for the first time, many selected education for a productive career—a central value in Communism—as a strategy that would enable them to move into the mainstream. This behavior embraced the secularized Jewish value of education while at the same time permitting Jews to benefit in a way that was socially and economically advantageous. According to Dina Alexander:

> Higher education is the only thing you can get out of that system. Because I was Jewish, I had two strikes against me. That was made clear to me by my parents. "You're a Jew. You want to get into college? Your grades have to be much better than everybody else's." This was a Jewish thing. Education, that's the only ticket.

In addition to the vestigial sense of "Jewish blood" and "family tradition," in many families being well educated, holding a prestigious position, and being able to provide an equivalent or better economic future for the children have become the central organizing factors in Jewish identity. Given the negativity of the alternatives for Jews, it is no surprise that many Jews preferred to identify themselves in terms of their occupations,[4] where they have achieved success, rather than in terms of ethnicity, religion, or nationality. Even if they were not well educated themselves, highly skilled factory workers and craftsmen, who were proud of their achievements and aware of the prestige afforded them by being recognized as good workers, placed a high value on education and encouraged their children to study for the professions and technical occupations.

Zoya Kramer thinks that the Jews of the Soviet Union have always had to make difficult decisions about fields of study and eventual occupations both because of the constraints of their ethnic designation and because of their personal integrity as Jews.

> If I had to do it again, in the United States, I wouldn't choose the Math Department. One reason I chose math was that my father was a mathematician, and I was brought up in a family with friends who were mathematicians. The other reason was that there are very few fields in Russia that did not involve politics in any way. You could have studied literature, and it was a political department because you were supposed to analyze the literature according to Marxist philosophy. You could not study history at all there without distorting all the facts—everything—regardless of whether it was ancient Rome or Russia in 1917—had to be distorted in accordance with the philosophy, so there were very, very few fields that did not require any political correctness other than engineering, math, physics, chemistry, things like that. Out of all that, I liked math most, so that's how I chose it. Those are the only fields where you can isolate yourself somewhat from the life in the Soviet Union, where you can be true to yourself.

As a result of both Jewish values and an awareness that Jews must be extraordinarily well prepared to overcome anti-Semitism and succeed, the trend for Jews as a group over the course of the century has been to become very well educated. Many have struggled to achieve at high levels and as a result take great pride in both personal and aggregate Jewish accomplishments. Although Jews seldom hold the top positions, the few who do frequently find themselves as targets of anti-Semitism during difficult times. According to Boris Akselrod:

> The Jews are the most educated and the wealthiest—if I may so say so—class in Russia. The parents were pushing their children through school. They have the best jobs, and they do the best job even if the government just cannot appreciate them. So they have the second-level positions—not the top, but second top. There were probably quotas not to allow Jews to the take highest positions. My wife's grandfather was chief of his collective farm. He organized this collective farm for thirty years. They unsuccessfully tried to force him to step down for quite a few years, but people went with slogans—"Schmerka back to chairmanship!" or whatever. I would say that Jews are the most educated and the richest class in the Soviet Union, and my family was part of that. Nevertheless, I felt myself a stranger. I felt myself cut off. I felt hatred when I went anywhere.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the government—yet again—tightened higher-education quotas for Jewish students as part of the larger anti-Zionist political program. Many parents, drawing on their collective memory of their own struggles for education[5] during Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign of the late 1940s and early 1950s, perceived an immediate threat to their children's futures, realizing that the next generation might not be permitted to emulate their parents' degree of collective occupational success. According to Masha Dubinskaya, who refused to allow her children to be limited by the system as she had been, discrimination against Jews was rarely hidden, and she had been told outright by a college admissions examiner, "'You'll never get into a college because your name is Masha Israel.' That's my middle name, Israel. My father's name was Israel [a definitive Jewish marker]."

This fear was well founded, with the numbers of Jews admitted to universities declining from 112,000 in 1968 to 88,000 in 1972 (Sachar 1990:625). During this period Esther Smolor was devastated when her daughter, an excellent student, was rejected by every college she applied to. Always enterprising and aware of how to maneuver through the system, Esther, who had completed her own education during Stalin's terror, was eventually able to arrange for her daughter to be admitted to the only place that would take her.

> At that time it was very hard; it was terrible. We didn't know what to do with her even though she graduated from one of the best high schools in Kiev. Then I found through a friend a night college, but during the day the students had to work, but she did not work. She was learning. In Russia they do illegal things to reach the legal necessities.[6] She needed to go to college, but she could not be accepted like everybody else because she was Jewish. This friend gave us the document saying that she had already worked some place for him for two years and with this document she got into college. It was a very bad college for railroad trains, and she did not like it. She was an artist, and she only wanted to be an architect. There was a rumor that in Moscow, in architectural school you could be accepted no matter if you were Jewish if you were very good. She went to Moscow, and she passed, and after five years she graduated. Her first job was very interesting, but we were told that she never would have a promotion because she was Jewish. Her diploma was very good so this is why she was accepted, but with no future.

Despite the apparently successful outcome of their daughter's struggle for an education, it was clear to the Smolors that she would continue to face discrimination in her career (cf. Lovenheim 1991:22). Just as the parents were unwilling to commit their daughter's future to the vicissitudes of Soviet life, neither were the daughter and her husband willing to raise their new baby in a country where her nationality would circumscribe her options. By 1979 they had decided that the Soviet Union was no place to raise and educate another generation of Jewish children.

Throughout the 1970s discrimination against Jewish students at every level escalated as Larisa Kirtsov's daughter reported.

> When my daughter was going to kindergarten, there were two Jewish kids in a group of thirty-five. One day she came home and said, "Nobody plays with me and Michael because we are niggers [sic] from Africa." Little kids didn't knew who they were, but they knew they were different.

Many families began to accept the fact that ethnicity was the paramount variable and that if their children were identified as Jews, their educational plans and career choices—whether they were outstanding or simply average students—would eventually be short-circuited. The fact of emigration and its effect on government policy became a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Jewish students were discriminated against in higher education, more families applied to leave, and as more families left, taking with them their intangible educations, the educational institutions admitted fewer Jewish students. At one point in the 1970s only 60 percent of those applying for higher education were allowed to matriculate (Gitelman 1988:282–83). Even though Michael Charney was only thirteen in 1973 when his parents decided to emigrate for the future of their children—a central theme during this period—he was aware of what would probably happen despite his obvious talents.

> In Russia, when you are young, they do all sorts of testing. They test for what things you are good at, and I was good at math and dancing, so they suggested that I pursue those avenues. Ballet[7] was a very prestigious thing to do so I went into dancing, which was fun. I did that since I was about seven years old. I belonged to a group that competed on the national level. Russian national dancing is the barre, and basically the prep is the same as in ballet. Then the Bolshoi Ballet came, and I was selected, so that's what I was going to do next. I danced a few performances, but I never actually moved to Moscow. That's the time I was leaving. If I had stayed in Russia, I would probably have been there. Ah, if we would have stayed. . . . In the Soviet Union, most people who have very good lives are your entertainers, your dancers, your athletes or politicians. If I had had an opportunity to have a good life, my parents would have wanted me to have that, very much. But as far as dancing, at some point, being Jewish would have affected it. It was not something that was a mystery. It was very obvious.

Raisa Nisinova from Kiev, however, knew that her talents were not academic and that she had few educational options beyond high school. Although her brother was a much better student than she was, there were still questions about his ability to become a physicist and eventually to find a good job in that field.

> What I remember is that Jews were not allowed in schools of higher education in large percentages. There were no more than two Jewish kids allowed in a class. They were very open about it. For me, having a very typical Jewish nose made it very difficult. Everybody called me a Jew, although my maiden name was not a typical Jewish name but could go both ways. My mother knew that I shouldn't even try to get into college, because they tried to kill everybody who goes to college with exams. She said, "You're not a student type; you're more personality. You need to go somewhere where you'll get a job. Better off, get a husband!"

One exception to the rule of anti-Semitic discrimination in education was Boris Akselrod who never looked toward the professions because he was a talented athlete who received preferential treatment.

> With me it was a different story. I was an athlete, and they closed their eyes [to the Jewish label because] any college would be glad to accept me. I chose a college for physical education, but I could have gone to any college. I was a boxer. Sports were very popular in Russia. Just because of this talent, I could choose. I enlisted in the Army, but I got paid to box.

Nevertheless, other Jewish athletes were limited in their educations and careers because of their nationality. Ari Skolnik from Minsk, a bicycle racer of international caliber, was neither permitted to compete outside the Soviet Union as an athlete nor later, as a college coach, to accompany the racers he trained.

As many Jewish parents began to realize that the discriminatory cycle had begun again and that the probability of serious limitations on their children's education and preparation for future careers was too great to gamble on, increasing numbers began to consider risking everything on emigration, thereby, instituting a trend that has continued for more than a quarter of a century.

The Threat of Economic Limitations for the Children

With work as a primary professed value in the Soviet Union, the unemployed feared being denounced as parasites (cf. Siegel 1988:158). Those who could not find jobs or lost them because they applied for exit documents were particularly vulnerable to personal self-criticism and depression as well as to antisocial and anti-Semitic attacks.

For many people it was critical that the first job be appropriate because they frequently remained in the same workplace for a lifetime with little possibility of change. The method of obtaining the first job was relatively straightforward if people were willing to accept the position assigned to them by the job placement committee connected with their university or training center. Although Dina Alexander was finally offered a job commensurate with her skills and training, she has always believed that there must have been some sort of internal political struggle that affected her placement.

> My first job, which was the only job I had in Russia, was teaching at the Diplomatic School in Moscow. When you finish your education, you go before the placement committee, and they give you a choice of jobs. My placement took about a month because they were playing politics. Of course, at the basis of it was anti-Semitism, so although I was recommended for a postgraduate course and teaching at my university until I finished, they

> were sending me to another school, then to a technical school. They were offering me jobs that did not match my qualifications. I would have been stuck in those jobs. What happened was that there were two political groups fighting between themselves. As a result, the dean, to show the Party leader or whatever group was against him that he was really interested in a good Party, just placed me in the Diplomatic School himself. It was a very good job. The Russian diplomatic corps were all my students.

Often graduates accepted the first job offered unless it was particularly unsuitable or distant from their homes. Polina Zilberman's husband, a university, graduate, faced unemployment when the committee did not place him appropriately.

> Oh, it was dangerous to be a Jew! Not dangerous, like you think you are going to be killed but that you won't be able to find a job. My husband was one of the best students, and he couldn't find a job. Then he met one of his friends who graduated with him but was a much worse student. His friend said, "I have three offers. Let's go to one place to say that I am not taking this job. Maybe you'll have the job." So he went down and told them, "I'm not taking this job." They tried to persuade him, but he said, "No, I made up my mind, but I have this friend who graduated with better marks, and you could take him." They said to send him in. They know Jews like a hound, especially when my husband had a very pronounced Ashkenazi Jewish appearance. When he came in, they didn't ask him anything. They immediately told him that they had just been sent a person to take the job, and that was it. They didn't take him.

Although some individuals searched for jobs independently through their own network of connections, it was much less common for young people preparing for their first jobs to do so than for the minority of experienced workers looking for a change. Masha Dubinskaya, a Slavic-looking blond, decided to explore her employment options.

> I tried once to change jobs. I don't look Jewish, so when I went to one company because I knew they were hiring people, I said, "I want a job, and I have lots of experience with the job." They said, "Okay." Then they took my passport, and they saw "Jewish" in my paragraph. They said, "No!" I tried only once to change jobs. I never tried after that.

With this type of experience at the forefront of the collective memory, Raisa Nisinova, from Kiev, was not surprised that her future would be shaped by her stereotypical ethnic appearance.

> I was approached to be an announcer on the TV and radio. They told me up front, that with my face I could easily make it in TV. Unfortunately, I

> have that nose that would give me away, and they wouldn't be able to put me on TV because I'm Jewish, but they would be more than happy to give me a radio job. So I was doing radio shows, and nobody knew who I was on the radio. In every little thing we learned to accept what we had and enjoy what was given. I was very happy to be on the radio and did not dwell that I could not be on TV.

Because of the value invested in prestigious employment, work itself has taken on a symbolic meaning for the Jews, giving them a positive identity that counteracts, in part, the negativity of their nationality label (Paul and Jacobs 1981:92). Anything, then, that threatened the job or limited the person from rising to the level he or she perceived as appropriate was a serious issue. Zena Epsthein, who has always believed that she was held back in her work because she was Jewish, epitomized the collective Jewish work experience of those coming of age in the postwar period. A superior student who had become a diligent employee, she had moved up the ladder until anti-Semitism halted her progress. Uncharacteristic of most Jews, however, Zena rebelled, speaking out against the blatant discrimination at work and making the strategic decision to remove herself and her children before they became targets for the same sort of treatment.

> I got my master's degree; then I got another master's degree. The first was as a buyer of merchandise for distribution stores and marketing, and the second was a degree in economics. I worked as a buyer in a store, then as an economist, and for a couple of years I worked as the executive director, but they did not give me the title of director, just the work. I didn't get the salaries or promotions because I was Jewish. They let you know one way or another that you have some restrictions because you are Jewish. This affected me very much. I was asked to come to the minister, and he told me that they appreciated my job very much. They knew that I could do the work, but they couldn't give that position because I was Jewish. I said, "Thank you very much, but I am going to leave. This is it! I just cannot take it any more."

Zena's husband Max, a large, strong man who did not look Jewish, was a former sailor who had worked as a machine operator in a Soviet factory. He attributed the lack of anti-Semitism exhibited toward him to his intimidating size, his superlative work record, and the fact that he kept a low profile. Content to work quietly on his machine, he did not want to be promoted or singled out in any way. He believed that Zena's push for excellence and recognition at work attracted the anti-Semitic response.

Genya Fein represents the dilemma faced by many of the parents who had fought to become educated and were, by the 1970s, well established in relatively good jobs.[8] The question of whose professional future should take priority was serious and far reaching. How could conscientious parents allow their own occupational lives to take precedence over the problems faced by their children whose educations and subsequent careers were being threatened by the anti-Semitic political climate? Genya describes the situation as she saw it in Odessa.

> After high school I passed the exam to civil engineering university, and I got a master's degree. It was, of course, not so easy, but it was not so easy to be accepted for anybody. However, for Jewish people there was a smaller percentage accepted. I was twenty-two years old when I started to work. I got promoted very quickly, step by step, and in a few years I was a senior engineer. Everywhere in Odessa were Jewish engineers, and they liked me immediately. I was lucky through all my life. In school and in the university I never heard a bad word about my being Jewish because I was always with the majority, and I was always a favored person. I knew there that many people had antagonism, but I could not tell you that about myself. Maybe I had some limitation, like I couldn't be president of that company, but I really did not intend to be. I stayed with my first job eleven years, and during those years we started to think that maybe we would have to leave Russia because as our daughter grew up, we found that the time for Jewish people was worse and worse. Not for us, because where you stay already in your place, you are. To be accepted was more difficult, and for our daughter we wanted a free country.

Despite the difficulties some Jewish workers had in finding appropriate jobs, dealing with anti-Semitic colleagues, being overlooked deliberately for promotions because of prejudice, or maneuvering through the political undercurrents, many found their niches and remained in the same jobs for their entire careers. It was common knowledge among Jews that they were being forced—perhaps by their own inner pressures to excel—to work much harder than members of other nationalities in order to be accepted and appreciated as good workers, and that there was always the threat of being undermined by latent anti-Semitism. Thus, Jews took personal satisfaction in surviving in hostile environments, producing high-quality products or providing excellent services, and frequently rising to a high level within their work units. Most of those who came to Hartford during this period were hard-working people who had tried not to draw attention to themselves except when they felt they were being slighted in education or at work.

The bitter irony for many of those who struggled to attain appropriate educations to prepare themselves for high-level positions in prestigious fields was that many eventually chose to sacrifice their own achievements for the future of their children. Most were vaguely aware that they might not find equivalent employment in Israel or even in the United States, but they were willing to hope for the best for themselves if they were assured of a future unlimited by anti-Semitic restrictions for their children. Despite their willingness to give up the security that stemmed from excellent production records over their working lives, they did not realize how difficult it would be to find appropriate work in the United States or to maintain it during periods of economic recession. Unlike their predecessors at the turn of the century, who had been willing to do any sort of low-level "immigrant work" because they had few high-level economic skills to transfer from the old country, the Soviet Jewish emigrants whose occupational skills were tied tightly to their Jewish identification were products of a technical-industrial world and expected to be welcomed as such. Most, if not all, were unaware of the enormous blow they might suffer to their personal identities, a loss that could potentially haunt many of them throughout the remainder of their careers.

For those who had decided to emigrate, the work of restructuring their Jewish identity within the Soviet Union was well underway with the new concept of "Jew" now encompassing a positive source of strength and action. Although Jews had always fought for educational and economic opportunities, their new struggle for the right to emigrate and to recreate themselves brought about a fundamental shift in personal and, in some cases, group identification. No longer willing to accept secondary status because of a national stereotype, many began to employ the coping skills they had developed in other contexts to confront the inherent resistance in the Soviet system. Freedom to create new positive identities for themselves and for their children in new places where they could be valued as individuals without the pejorative aspects of their Jewish label was an enormous incentive for many, frequently offsetting the possibility of swift, serious Soviet retaliation and further denigration by those "others" who now perceived them as traitors. Many Soviet Jews were determined to throw off the limitations of anti-Semitism and Communism and to create new Jewish lives, according their own definitions, in the West.

8

The Exodus

> It was very hard at emigration. It is still very hard. No matter how disgusted we were with the system, it was still our roots, our culture, our memories, the graves of our parents. Everything had to be left behind.
>
> —Polina Zilberman

Breaking Old Patterns

Although the Soviet government in the 1960s had most likely assumed that only a few Zionist troublemakers would apply to leave, by the early 1970s even non-Zionists who simply wanted a better life without discrimination began to request exit permits. Zena Epsthein succinctly summarizes her family's attitude: "Our goal was to get out from Russia and go to a free world and get for our kids freedom."

Neither the negative Soviet propaganda nor the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict[1] discouraged those who were determined to go, and applications flowed in from all parts of the Soviet Union. As soon as they were settled abroad, many wrote and telephoned other family members, encouraging them to leave as well. Soon a chain migration was pulling people out of the Soviet Union and angering the government.

This significant breach of previous behavioral patterns rippled through the entire Soviet Jewish population as ordinary people, who had never considered dissent as an option, began to make their choices and to act on them, often after years of agonizing analysis and individual indecision. Although adult family members of both generations were frequently part of the decision-making process, some school children were not told that they would be emigrating until their parents had applied for documents. In many families, one or two prime movers carried the less adventuresome along with them (cf. Paul and Jacobs 1981:105). In some cases individuals refused to consider such radical change and eventually remained behind. Overall, however, the young middle-aged (30–50) group made the decisions and their parents and children followed more or less enthusiastically. This middle generation in its peak working years had the most to lose from emigration: job security, professional accomplishments and prestige, a trusted network of friends, a known place in society, and the material goods they had worked so hard to accumulate. Everyone believed that the children had the most to gain—bright futures unrestricted by anti-Semitism—and that the grandparents, generally retired and out of the mainstream of Soviet life, would be affected least as long as they remained close to their families. What had begun, following the Six Day War, as a small number of Zionist innovators, demanding to emigrate, became a major trend within the decade.

With other groups including Armenians and ethnic Germans also demanding exit visas, it was clear to observers that government officials believed that the granting of so many documents was an admission that the Soviet system had failed and that the Motherland could not hold her children. In 1971, 14,310 exit permits were issued, and in 1972 and 1973 more than 30,000 were issued each year. In the middle of the decade, the number of those receiving permission dropped, and refusals rose sharply. By 1978, following the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, the numbers shot up again, reaching 51,313 in 1979, the peak emigration year of that period (Pinkus 1988:280).

Gathering Courage and Information

While most of the potential émigrés were disillusioned by the Soviet political and social systems and unhappy with the daily shortages, difficult living conditions, and the potential for limitations on their children's educational and occupational opportunities, some were also discouraged by their inability to create Jewish lives. Others, however, wanted to drop the label "Jew" and move into the secular world without an encumbrance that did not give them anything positive. All were tired of the general oppression of the Communist society. Irina Greenberg describes the mental processes she went through before making the calculation to leave.

> There was a spirit of people leaving in 1976 and 1977, and everybody started to evaluate. If you couldn't escape, then you just had to adjust and you tried to find a way to survive and live with it. But if you saw that there was another solution for the problem, then you started evaluating what is right, what is your future here and what is your future if you emigrate. Even so, the future for an emigrant was unknown, but the future in staying there was quite known, so you chose unknown to known.

The decision to emigrate was not easy and rarely did it turn on a single factor, although, for families, freedom for the children to pursue their educational and career goals was almost always a critical concern (cf. Siegel 1988:84). Irina Greenberg continues:

> There was no future for kids [in the Soviet Union] because they were tougher on Jewish kids because of other people's emigration. They did not want to provide Jews with more education because they felt that they took their education and then left. So I knew that my kids wouldn't be able to get an education.

From childhood, Dina Alexander had focused primarily on educational attainment and intellectual development, which she perceived as her core Jewish values. Even though she understood the complexities of emigration and knew that she was sacrificing her academic career, she believed that change for the sake of her son was critical and that her decision "boiled down to values."

> I despise socialism as a concept. I didn't believe it. My decision was political. It wasn't even as much religious as it was political. I didn't want to have children there. I got pregnant when I was thirty-three when we applied. My son was supposed to be born in America! I would never have children there. It was a prison! The biggest reason I applied right then was that there was an opportunity to run because they opened up some kind of door. You were stupid not to try.

Like Dina Alexander, Mark Sidur made the decision to leave based on ethics and values, but his were specifically religious. Mark, who had known for years that he wanted to lead a religious life, had never been driven by economics or a career as were many of his cohorts. He had held a series of jobs, among them tourist guide and professor of literature, but these did not form the crux of his identity. Involved with a group of religious Zionist friends, a number of whom were refused documents, he had surprisingly little difficulty getting out.

> There are two main reasons for leaving. First, life in the Soviet Union was becoming absolutely unbearable: nothing to buy, nothing to eat, not as bad as it is now [in the 1990s], but it was getting worse and worse. And 50 percent, particularly the younger people, they still had some Jewish ideals, something intuitive, instinctive. They did not know really what they wanted, but they had the same feeling I had. This is not my country. I am going to end up elsewhere, and someday I'll be in my country with my people. My widowed mother wanted to go with me, but she was afraid. She said, "Don't you know that there will be KGB at the very last moment. They will put you on a train and send you to Siberia." But I hated the country. I hated the regime, the ideology. It was lies twenty-four hours a day. I couldn't say to my students what I wanted. I was afraid to speak to people, to say what I really thought about some political, social, and religious issues.

In addition to wrestling with the intellectual, philosophical, and emotional issues inherent in rejecting the Motherland, Soviet Jews worried about the practical aspects of carving out niches for themselves in a new country. Among those who were concerned about the mechanics of daily life in the United States were Simon and Rosa Lurie from Kiev. Since they knew that they would never be able to work in America because of their ages, their basic concern was how they would support themselves. Eventually, however, they heard about public assistance for the elderly, which they equated with their Soviet pensions and health coverage and interpreted it in terms of freedom from dependence on their children. According to Rosa:

> When our children came to us in 1972 and said, "We want to go to America," my husband was listening to the Voice of America. In America after sixty-five years, you can get some money, but not before sixty-five. If you are not working, you will not get anything. We were not sixty-five, not ready to leave the country, and we told them if they wanted to go, go, and after several years, we would come. They said no. They were not leaving because if they left, we would stay there, and it would not be easy.

Not only were there pressures on the Jews to leave the Soviet Union during the 1970s, but there were also a number of positive incentives from other countries that encouraged them to improve their lives abroad. Under its Law of Return not only was Israel willing to accept any Jew who wanted to become a citizen, but it would also provide settlement assistance. The United States, which had abolished its quota system for immigrants in 1965, opened the doors to religious and political refugees who were discriminated against in Communist countries—particularly those from Southeast Asia and the U.S.S.R.—and set up programs to assist their integration into the economy. International Jewish refugee agencies—The Jewish Agency, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and the Joint Distribution Committee—provided shelter and stipends to refugees in Europe, then assisted them as they moved on to Israel or to other Western countries where local Jewish social service agencies provided practical resettlement aid (Sanders 1965:595).

Meanwhile, by 1971, those who had left earlier began to bombard their families and friends with letters, telephone calls, and later, in some cases, visits encouraging them to emigrate before the Soviet Union cut off visas again. Masha Dubinskaya[2] received such a letter from a friend.

> In the company in Russia where I worked we had quite a lot of Jewish people. About 70 percent of them have emigrated now. They are in America and in Israel. One of these colleagues went to Hartford to join his children. We got a letter from him that it's good place to stay. It's a quiet place and an industrial location.

Everyone applying to emigrate during this period went through essentially the same process, which varied somewhat over time as the authorities placed more emphasis on one or another aspect of the application (cf. Markowitz 1993:265–268). It was no surprise that whichever part the authorities focused on was sure to create problems for potential emigrants, and they all worried that they would not be able to cope with new stumbling blocks. A lucky few, however, sailed through with few obstacles, while some were harassed at every juncture and others refused.

Emigration: Moving through the Process

The following typical examples illustrate the various steps toward emigration. The process for everyone always began the same way with a *vysov* (an "invitation") from a "relative" living in Israel and an Israeli visa. Both were required by the Department of Visas and Registration (OVIR) in the Ministry of Internal Affairs before it would issue an application for an exit permit. Although the "relatives" were frequently fictitious, the Soviet Union insisted that exit permits—which would eventually cost the applicants anywhere from forty to five hundred rubles, depending on the year—were being issued only for "family reunification." With mail delivery in the Soviet Union unreliable and letters frequently "lost," Soviet Jews had no way of obtaining these documents directly from the Israeli Embassy after its closure in 1967, when the Soviet government severed diplomatic relations in protest over the Six Day War.

Although the Netherlands Embassy in Moscow had agreed to "represent the Israeli interest" in the U.S.S.R. as it had done twice before in the 1950s when the Soviets had protested Israeli actions, neither country realized that this would be a decades-long association and that the Dutch Embassy staff would be instrumental in transmitting more than 200,000 "invitations" to Soviet Jews, issuing visas, giving advice and concrete information about the journey itself, and disbursing loans from Israeli funds for one-way tickets to Vienna (Buwalda 1997:23–36).[3]

For Zoya Kramer, the application process lasted only three months, but this followed a two-year wait for her *vysov.*

> I couldn't get an invitation. That was a required document, and I couldn't apply for a visa without it. The reason I couldn't get it was that the Soviet post office didn't feel like delivering it. There was absolutely no way to trace it or prove that that was what was happening even though I know I was sent a few invitations from Israel. They were registered letters and had numbers, but all my inquiries got the same response: check with the Israeli side. There was no diplomatic relationship so there was nothing they could do. The invitations were from friends who had left Leningrad years prior, but they were not from them per se. Israel had some fictitious names that it

> was using for all the invitations, but they were requested by my friends. I finally got my invitation through the Holland embassy in Moscow. I would never have gotten it by mail. It was handed over by them. I was very happy to get it the way I did.

Compared to past years, the 1970s[4] were propitious times to apply for visas, yet each step was a potential minefield with the possibility of ultimate persecution and refusal. Some Soviet Jews referred to this process as the "labyrinth," while others called it the "ten circles of hell" (Buwalda 1997:47). To complicate matters further, individuals had no idea of how those family members outside the immediate circle applying to leave—friends, co-workers, and officials responsible for issuing their documents—would react. Boris Akselrod describes that time:

> That was probably the most dangerous part of when you were applying for a visa. Immediately you became an enemy, and everybody—you had to be so careful—was trying to do a hard time to you. That's why a lot of people were afraid to apply because they knew what they would have to go through. They fired me immediately.

As part of the official application, applicants were required to submit a large number of documents including a formal declaration of intent to leave, an autobiography, photographs, copies of all important life documents—such as birth certificates and marriage licenses—permission from parents and other relatives including divorced exspouses, releases from the military, loan companies, and courts, and references from work. In order for the Charneys to receive their exit permits in 1973, Michael's grandmother[5] was required to sign a release.

> Being the closest relative to us, the mother of my father had to sign a letter that she was willing to let us leave and not see us ever again. You can imagine the emotion! She didn't want to sign the paper, but she finally did, and we were able to leave.

Esther Smolor had a difficult time getting references from work. Her mentor, the "old Bolshevik" who had hired and promoted her in his college and had generally supported her when times were difficult for Jews, refused to give her a reference even though she had helped him early in his career.

> When I told him I want to leave Russia, he almost beat me! He screamed and said it was worse than it appeared, and I said to him, "Listen, you will not be punished for this." Before, if someone left, not only was the person who left punished, but the boss would be dismissed. I said, "Now you will not be punished for me." But he still hated me, and he said, "You do not understand, I will be punished. It is such a shame in my college

> somebody wants to leave for Israel. If there will be a war, your grandchild will fight against my grandchild." I said, "Israel doesn't want to fight with Russia. What are you talking about?" It was two or three hours. I was crying, I was blaming my husband, trying to find excuses. He said, "Divorce your husband!" Of course, I lost my job, but all this wasn't to grant the permission. It was to give me a character reference. This man was angry for several reasons. One of them was because he was afraid, and the second one was because there was such an attitude. Bad people would tell on you, that you wanted to go to Israel. It was ideological and personal both. I finally went to see the department chief at our college. He was more loyal to me, and he helped me.

In 1972, the Soviet government decided to require everyone applying for emigration documents to refund the cost of the education they had received at the expense of the state. Although the Soviet Jews were unaware of the publicity ramifications abroad or of the political pressure this policy generated by keeping their plight in the public eye during the presidential campaign in the United States, this "diploma tax" hit the Soviet Jews hard because most were well educated, many with more than one diploma (Buwalda 1997:90–95). Zena Epsthein found that her higher education had suddenly become an enormous liability.

> Four years, we waited to leave Russia. By that point in 1974, I needed to pay for five diplomas. They actually gave me a deal, almost 25,000 rubles altogether, but we didn't have that money. When we found how much we had to pay back, we just stopped all the procedures. Then, when the law was changed, we started over. That law was in effect just a few years, and at that later time we needed only to pay to give up citizenship. For each person 500 rubles. That we could manage.

Irina Greenberg, who had struggled for years to obtain permission to practice medicine and to teach in the Ternopol medical school, had a very difficult three months while she and her family waited for their visas.

> They didn't have Jews in Ternopol at that time. Jews were counted on fingers because during the war they were all killed in that area, so when I came from Kiev [to attend medical school], all my friends there were Russian. When we applied to leave, they were afraid to talk to us, so we were in a vacuum for three months. I lost my job. I was expelled from medical school immediately. I went to a lawyer and was told that I wouldn't win, but I appealed anyway. My husband didn't lose his job because he worked in a hospital. They were giving him a hard time, but he didn't lose his job.

Irina's brother, who was committed to Russified life in the Soviet Union, had no intention of leaving but was afraid that his sister's emigration would reflect poorly upon him.

> He didn't have direct problems, but they always lived in fear since then, so now he has stomach ulcers. He says it was because he was worried about me. He didn't lose his job, but anyway they were worried that someone would find out. They didn't tell the officials that I emigrated. I left from a different city, so they were hoping nobody would notice. But I guess you can't keep secrets from them, so I am sure they knew.

Others were distressed because of philosophical and political considerations. In 1978 Max Epsthein's cousin berated him for planning to emigrate.

> My cousin, he is a very Communist trained person. He called us traitors because we went, but in 1992 his family said, "We understand why you left. We have to do the same thing." They want to leave, but for Israel because they cannot come to the United States to us.

Raisa Nisinova's brother, who was in his early twenties when her parents began to make plans to emigrate, faced the serious risk of being refused and drafted into the army. Because of the negative attitude of Soviet Jews toward serving in the anti-Semitic army (Carmeli and Fadlon 1997:395), her parents were unusually cautious while they waited for their documents.

> It was very dangerous to be Jewish during the time we announced we were leaving for Israel. Actually it took us three years to decide. In 1972 our uncle left for Israel, and that's when it all started. Being connected to somebody who went to Israel was very dangerous, and we were very afraid. Before we left, for about a year, my brother had to go in hiding because he was supposed to be drafted into the army. They were trying to make sure he was not leaving. They were trying to talk to me against my family, and they said, "You know we don't care if you're Jewish. You have to stay here. We want young kids to stay here. We don't care about the old people. We let them go." My brother was living with some relatives and constantly changing places, and we were very quiet. I was not allowed to date. I was not allowed to leave the house because I could have met somebody who could inform on us. We should be very very quiet and have low profile. I think it was as bad as that. I think my parents took exactly the course that should have been taken. Being kids, we didn't understand how much goes on. Plus, we had to do a lot of adjusting because all of a sudden we were told that our parents were planning to go to Israel. To us it was the curse of the world. We

> were brought up as Communists. I was a president of the school, and my brother was a president of the school for the political organization. We were very loud-mouthed kids who were always pro-Communism, and all of a sudden we were told that all we had been taught and everything we were doing was nothing. Communism was just a big balloon that was going to burst sooner or later, so we had to leave. There was a lot of animosity because of our being Jewish between us and our Russian friends. As kids they felt envy. You are going abroad. You are going to see something, and they never will get a chance to see it. They had as difficult a life financially as we did socially. They were not being persecuted because of their religion, but they had no way out, and we did. They persecuted us because of that, because if we hated where we were, we could get up and go, and they couldn't.

Unwilling to attract attention to themselves at school, Michael Charney and his younger brother did not tell anyone that they were planning to emigrate.

> When my family decided to leave, it was kept a secret from my school. The reason I didn't tell them was because at that time Israel was at war, and most of the publicity that you heard was that the Soviet Union was allying itself with the Arab side. We were leaving on an Israeli visa, so it was not a very good thing to tell anyone. A month before we applied, a girl from my school told them she was going to Israel, and they basically took her apart officially. In the school every morning there was a line-up to start the sessions. At the line-up they would put her in front of the whole school and take her Young Pioneers tie off and call her very bad names. It was not a very pleasant experience. After we saw that, we just knew we had to keep quiet.

Nicolai Eyot's decision to leave the Soviet Union was complicated by his job in a firm where his work was classified as militarily sensitive and by his membership in the Communist Party, an association he had unsuccessfully tried to avoid several years earlier. Disengaging and obtaining the necessary releases from both was grueling and dangerous.

> My first step was to leave my job. I looked for another job, but I couldn't find anything. I knew if I started [applying for an exit visa from] the place where I was, it would take me years [because I was doing classified work and would most likely have been refused]. It's almost impossible, as a Jew, to find a job without having connections, but I couldn't ask any of my friends to help me because I knew I would be leaving the country and didn't want them to know. After seven months I finally found a job and worked at that place for a year. The fact that I was a member of the Party helped me

> find a job. They made me assistant manager at the design office in the chemical plant, and then I applied to leave. You should have heard the meeting they had about this! It was a terrible, terrible experience because in order for me to apply to the visa office I had to bring with me tons of documents and one of the documents was from my place of employment. It was not just a reference saying that I worked there, but a reference saying I had been a member of the Communist Party, and they expelled me because I was a traitor! Not because I didn't want to be a member anymore, but because I was traitor! It was standard. That's the way it was done. I had to go to the local cell and talk to those workers. They told me the same words over and over: "You are a Jew, you are a traitor." They said, "How come the Motherland gave you life, gave you everything, and now you want to emigrate?"
>
> That was just the workers! Then I went to the committee meeting and more educated people said things like, "If there was a war with Israel, which side would you be on? Would you fight against us?" I had the perfect answer: "It's not necessary that Israel and the Soviet Union be at war. Things change. You remember when the Soviet Union considered Libya a fascist state? Today, we are best friends. Why do you think the Soviet Union would go to war with Israel?" When you wanted to emigrate, they put you through pure hell!
>
> Nowadays people don't experience that; that was the worst time then [1976]. People were fired from jobs then, and now [1992] they are not. I was lucky in that respect. They didn't fire me. The people I worked with in the design office were, for the most part, good to me. There was one time after a few months where my plant manager called me in and said they could no longer keep me as assistant manager because I had to deal with people. Since I was going to Israel and was not a Party member anymore, I could not supervise people. They told me they were hiring a new assistant manager in the design office, but I could continue working and keep my salary. That was most unusual. I was lucky.

Despite the individual differences depending on geographical location, the political climate of the moment, and the general lack of helpfulness of Soviet bureaucrats, the trend toward granting exit documents continued. Harassment also continued, with people facing four political and bureaucratic barriers: the inability to receive or the delay in obtaining "invitations"; difficulty in gathering all of the required documents, particularly as the requirements changed; the lack of money to pay the varying fees that were levied, then rescinded or modified over the years; and the inexplicable refusal by the government to allow some people to leave at all.

Throughout this period, although many people were refused visas seemingly at random, those who worked in particular industries or had connections with the military seemed to be at more risk. While most potential émigrés proceeded as though they would not be refused, others took the risk seriously and acted accordingly. Genya Fein, a senior engineer in Odessa, who assumed that she would not be issued exit documents if she applied to leave from her company because of the work she did, found a new job in a less sensitive industry before submitting her request.

> We started to think about going away from Russia, but I had a security job. I worked with plans and that's why I changed from this big consultant company to a small company where I was lucky to work until the last day. I had my salary, especially at the last moment to buy bread and food before we left.

Not so lucky was Genya's husband Shmuel, who was fired immediately when he told his company that he was applying to leave. Like Genya Fein, Nick Schulman's mother planned her family's move several years in advance to ensure that emigration would go smoothly.

> My mother was strongly for emigration. She didn't like the society. She didn't like the system. She said it was a lot of lies. My mother was fed up for many years. We were living in Chelyabinsk in the Urals, and when we decided to emigrate, we moved to White Russia to Gomel nine months before we applied to emigrate, because from Chelyabinsk only one family before us had emigrated. From Gomel many more people were emigrating. When we got to Gomel, my mother tried to find a job. She's a Ph.D.; she had very good credentials. If she would go to the university, they would say, "We need a person like you very much." But the moment they saw her passport, they would probably realize that one of the reasons she migrated there was to emigrate from the Soviet Union so she never got an appropriate job when we lived in Gomel and neither did my father. My mother wiped floors for nine months, and the work was not her specialty. Actually it only took us six or seven weeks to get the permission after we applied. One of the reasons I think [it took such a short time to process the exit papers] was that we emigrated in 1977. A lot of people were emigrating at the time and that culminated in 1979 when 50,000 people emigrated. The place, again, that is why we chose it; and also, they didn't have any excuses to keep us. My mother was in pure science—there were no government secrets involved—and my father was choir conductor. He had no secrets that were dangerous to Russia! I think it was a combination of those things and luck. You had to be diplomatic with people in the office.

For many it was hard to be diplomatic as the authorities played one applicant against another. Leonid Silber was caught up in one of these manipulations against a friend, and his anxiety about emigration encompassed his friend's potential for refusal as well as his own.

> It was a very good feeling when you left that country. Russia was like the enemy. I had a big problem, getting out. We had a friend who was the head of the Department of Mathematics at the university. They tried to use me to put him in jail because he wanted to leave the country too. They squeezed me. I couldn't believe until the last second that I was free. They came here too after nine years.

Although documents might be issued for some family members, they might not arrive for another. The problem of what to do became acute. If the family left without that individual, he or she might never receive documents. If they remained, they might lose their own visas and not be able to leave at all even though they had lost their citizenship and frequently their jobs and had disposed of their household goods. People petitioned officials and tried every avenue. Sometimes the officials relented, and other times they did not. Esther Smolor fought with officials to the last minute.

> We waited eight months. We didn't have any involvement in military business so we believed it would be easy. Then we had a letter telling us to go. My husband, me, and my mother-in-law; but my daughter, and her husband, and child, three years old, had no letter so we decided to wait. If we would go, they would be refused, and there would be no reason for us to go. We had decided to leave Russia so that the young couple could start their lives. We decided to wait a little bit for them. Then, maybe because we applied the same day, we would get permission, and all of us could go.
>
> Then my daughter left because she had permission. When we went to the orders bureau to have our tickets ready, one man was sitting there. He looked at my mother-in-law. She was eighty-four years old, and he said, "Were you a member of a trade union?" She said, "Yeah, yeah, I was." She lived a long life, and up to seventy-two years she was a member—everybody was. "Where's your ticket [her union membership card]? You can't leave without that ticket. I know you hid it. You want to show it in America! I will not give you permission until you find the ticket." We ran to the office where she used to work. They said, "The head of the trade union died already!" We went to the house of the second member of the trade union, and during this time she had an infection of her leg, and she almost died. This man would not let us go. Every time we came, there was a big crowd and big line, and the permission never came. They said, "Go away, you people who betray your country. Traitors. You are traitors."

> Our passports were all taken from us, so we were not citizens, but we didn't receive the permission. We were nobody, no money, nothing, no protection from anything. We went every day on this line from 6:00 o'clock, but they said, "No way, no way." One day I came in the office, and I saw a different member and my permission already on the table. I said, "Here's my permission." He said, "Why didn't you take it before? Come, take it, it's already been two weeks. Take it, but today you have to leave!" I ran home like crazy. We got all our baggage. We had 500 rubles to live on and gave it to strangers, because you are not allowed to take it out of the country, and we left!

Dina Alexander was faced with the nightmare of refusal when her entire family including the new baby and her elderly parents were denied visas. Since she and her husband had immediately lost their jobs, they worried about basic survival without a steady income. Refusing to accept the official decision, however, Dina became politically active, drawing attention to herself through her association with other refuseniks.

> I was a member of the Women's Movement in Moscow, a refusenik group that was founded by Ida Nudel.[6] When you are a refusenik, you get to go to all those big shots and ask for permission to leave. Once a month you go to the state OVIR office, the visa registration place or the minister, the Moscow Chief of Police, the Internal Affairs. Nobody knew how many people he would receive. Usually it was about thirty, and there would be hundreds standing in line, waiting all night to be received. That's how I got involved in the women's group. It was good because I knew that petitioning was going to be organized, and when you petitioned for more than just yourself, it carried more value.
>
> The reason that I got out is because I belonged to the group that had found the person whose name was kept secret in the Central Committee but was responsible for emigration. I was not a member of that group when they picketed his office, sat on the floor. Fortunately for them, that was a time when the Tatars were picketing and the Germans were picketing, so there were three groups in his office. He picked the Jews, threw out the others, and gave them a promise he would see them all and investigate to see if anybody could leave and would let them know. This was 1979. The group was thirty-six women with families. Eventually he appointed the Minister of Internal Affairs to receive us, and the thirty-six were divided into twelve, twelve, and twelve. By then I was a member of the group. One group went, within an interval of two or three weeks another group, then the third group. He received us in groups or individually. He called in five or six people in our group and said, "You guys will never leave." That was my fifth

> year fighting. I got up and said, "Here's my petition." He said, "I don't want your petition." I said, "No, you want it." I made my speech that I never had any access to any secret documents, that I always used English textbooks that were sold in the bookstores. If you think that the world doesn't know that the Diplomatic School produces spies, you've got to be kidding! That was my pitch.
>
> Within each group he gave two permissions. One time probably he didn't want to give permission to most of the people there and he said, "Who was that teacher? Let's give her permission." That's how I got my permission. It was in March, 1979. The only problem was that since I didn't expect permission, I had signed another petition. The day I got my permission, I was in another place because we had had a meeting to set up a little demonstration for Women's Day. I was typing up the English petitions to the United Nations and to Mrs. Carter [wife of then President Jimmy Carter]. By then I was cynical already. When I got there, they were holding up the processing. They were waiting for me. He ushered me right in and of course my name was already on the petitions! He called me in and said I could go. I said, "Give me a written something. How could I believe you?" "You can believe us! What do you mean that you can't believe us!" So I walked out, and the women told me to just get lost, just leave and so I did. He started receiving this whole group, and then the women who were in charge of petitioning started reading the petition to him. He said, "Cut out that petitioning! Who signed it?" He started going through the list of people who had signed the petition. He heard my name and said, "What! I just gave her permission. Take it away!"
>
> The next morning they called me at home and said that the Minister wanted to see me. I could imagine what they wanted me to do, but I just sat there like a lump! I told them just one thing: I want to leave. He told me, "What kind of business is this? Two hundred fifty million people want to stay, and you want to go. What shall I tell the Minister?" I said, "Hey, you give, you take, whatever it is, you do!" Then three months later they sent me a card and said I had twenty days to get out! My parents and my son and I, not my husband because I had to apply separately because we didn't know who was being kept. We didn't know whether it was him or me. He's still there.

According to the informants for this study, throughout this period the major trend in the families was for one or two family members to convince the others that a break with the past was the only way to ensure a promising future. Frequently, these innovators were able to infuse the others with enthusiasm for such a move despite the potential for direct reprisals, which could affect their immediate personal well-being. In many families, some members resisted change yet were eventually swept along by the more forceful while others were left behind to continue their lives under the Soviet system. In the case of those who did not emigrate, the subsequent change in the political, economic, and social realities of the late 1980s and early 1990s reintroduced emigration as a viable alternative. As the negativity of the new alternatives became increasingly intense, it frequently overrode the fears and inertia of the 1970s and propelled people into new behavior patterns.

A Soviet Jewish Analysis of Refusal

No one is sure why some people were able to leave easily during this period and why others were refused, but everyone has a theory. According to Dina Alexander who was able to invite her refusenik husband for a visit for the first time only in 1991:

> It was one of those things I was trying to pursue and get an answer about, but they would never commit themselves. When the official said, "You'll never leave," he was implying that it was my work at the Diplomatic School, but it just wasn't so. I have a theory that they would hold the door open, and then—Whoops!—close it. One of the guys I talked to once said, "We only keep 2 percent." I figured maybe I was part of the 2 percent. There's no logic. It's all very sporadic, and it's crazy. It's better for the Jews out of that country. There's no doubt about that. Run! Run!

Irina Greenberg believes:

> The officials are unpredictable. Each state had different rules. It depends when you apply. If you are lucky, the political reasons are right for people to emigrate, and I was lucky. I applied at that time, 1977, and they let a lot of Jews out. One year later it was impossible to leave. Some years a lot of Jews, and then the next year they closed the border. Besides, some people had secret jobs. Some people were working in the army, and some people they didn't want to let them go.

Zena Epsthein thinks:

> Some people may have access to secrets, to clearance, yes, but some have a different kind of job. The government was just looking for something to keep people there, not let them go. That was my time.

Michael Charney has another theory.

> It's definitely predictable, we feel, because most of the people that we knew who had to wait years, their sons were in the military, and they wanted

> to leave shortly after. But the Soviet Union told them there was a period of so many years—I forgot exactly what it was—five years or so that you needed to live here after you left your work or left your association with them before you could leave. In the Soviet Union it was very difficult not to be involved with the police or army because the whole country was working toward producing equipment for the army. Most industries produced for the army. Most athletics were sponsored by the army or militia. So if you were playing soccer for that team or a coach on that team, you would be considered part of the militia. Any time you had that association or were a Party member or did research work for universities or institutes—anything that would associate you with something military or government—they would tell you that you could not leave. This was a lot of people!

Although the Soviet government claimed that those refused frequently worked in secret or military jobs that allowed them access to sensitive information, Sophia Bender did not think that those in this category even bothered to apply because they knew that they would be rejected and targets for reprisals. She believed that the government varied the length of time deliberately to keep people off balance.

David and Alla Vilensky agree with Sophia Bender and do not believe that "secrets" played a major part in refusals but that people had to be in the right place at the right time to be issued documents. The Vilenskys were fortunate, waiting only about two months in 1976, but a year later Alla's parents were refused twice. The first time, according to the government, was because her father had worked as a dental technician for the military twenty-three years before, and the second because they had another daughter in the Soviet Union. Alla says, "It was ridiculous, and nobody could tell you why." Boris Akselrod summarizes succinctly, "It's politics, and they can change the politics at any time."

Byrm (1994:70–71) has yet another theory. He believes that the fluctuations in the emigration figures directly reflect the government's perceived need for labor. In those years with labor surpluses, emigration was allowed. When labor was scarce, the reverse occurred.

It is interesting to note that in the discussion of why the Soviet government behaved as it did with respect to issuing exit documents, no one mentioned that this behavior pattern might simply be yet another manifestation of institutionalized anti-Semitism. Certainly, Esther Smolor's experience of the official's demanding the trade union card from a sick old woman when he already had the visas on his desk was little more than toying with a Jewish family. Had this been a single incident rather than part of a pattern that terrorized people and manipulated them at every stage of the application process, it could have been attributed to a single anti-Semite or a hostile individual. That this type of behavior was the norm indicates that anti-Semitism played a subsidiary, if not a primary role in the application process.

Additionally, the applicants were at the mercy of the international struggle between the U.S.S.R. and the United States and of the Soviet stance on Israel. These antagonisms created circumstances that Soviet Jews were unable to interpret or to predict because of incomplete and/or inaccurate information.[7]

Once people made the decision to leave and committed themselves publicly by signing documents, there was no turning back. They had divorced themselves from the Soviet people, and they could expect to be treated as traitors. Former friends and colleagues frequently avoided them, fearful that they would be tainted by association. The lucky ones who were neither ostracized nor fired from their jobs knew that they were exceptions and that at any moment the climate might change. Still, the numbers built, and what had begun as personal decisions made by individual innovators now became an ethnic trend encompassing more than a quarter of a million people who emigrated between 1971 and 1984, when the gates closed (Dominitz 1997:119).

Wandering in the Wilderness: The Transition

By the late 1970s it was an open secret that many émigrés never intended to go to Israel and that as soon as they reached Vienna or Rome, they would apply for entry to other Western countries, primarily to the United States. The Jewish Agency reports that prior to 1973 fewer than 4 percent of the total went anywhere other than Israel. By 1974, however, during the conflict in Lebanon, the percentage of *noshrim* (dropouts, the Jewish Agency term) began to increase with 81 percent—the highest rate until 1988 with 88.5 percent—of those leaving the Soviet Union rejecting Israel. This probably occurred because of the negative propaganda climate created by the war in Israel, the fact that most of the true Zionists had emigrated earlier, and the restructuring of U.S. immigration policy and procedures. As this shift in migration emerged, it divided Jewish activists sharply over whether or not Soviet Jewish émigrés who decided not to go to Israel should be supported by Jewish community resources. At the heart of this debate was the conflict between the Zionist ideal, which advocated all Jews settling in Israel, or the primarily American Jewish view that individuals should be free to choose to live wherever they wanted (Windmueller 1999:161). Until the early 1980s when it became obvious to the Soviet government that the majority were opting to go to the United States, changes in destination made in Europe were of little interest to the Soviet bureaucrats who were concerned only with the process within the U.S.S.R. At this point, however, the Israelis began to fear that the Soviets would seize on this dropout rate as a reason to curtail emigration (Sanders 1988:606).

As the émigrés waited in the station for the train to Vienna,[8] nobody knew exactly what they would be allowed to take through customs or what would arrive if they had already sent it. In addition, many had no idea of when or where they would eventually arrive to receive a package. Nonetheless, the musicians from Chelyabinsk—Nick Schulman and his father—shipped a piano, the only thing that arrived of all their possessions. Irina Greenberg, however, was able to bring out only a small amount of money. "I left my parents everything we had worked for [for] ten years: the car, library, all our possessions." Says Shmuel Fein, who had been on the last train from Odessa before that border closed in 1979:

> We could take everything we wanted except money and gold, but anyway we didn't have this. They took the gold necklace from Genya's neck and her ring. They did not allow it! Nothing. You could take books, but not all books. You could take clothing.

Once on the train, the refugees were faced with the decision of where to go. Few who eventually immigrated to Hartford believed that they had been deceived by propaganda about Israel, but it seems unrealistic to assume that they had not absorbed some of the unrelenting misinformation about that country. Despite the efforts of the Israelis to depict Israel in a positive light, according to Nehemia Levanon of Nativ, the Prime Minister's Liaison Bureau on Soviet Jewry:

> [Soviet Jews] were bombarded by press and television that ceaselessly painted Israel as a poor, terrible country whose very existence was endangered. An ignorant man who believed his choice is between going to a paradise [the United States] or to a country where his son will be shot in the Israeli army does not really have a free choice (Levanon 1999).

Raisa Nisinova describes how news about Israel had affected her throughout her school days.

> In Russia every morning at school there was a news period for 20 minutes. Every time it would come to Israel all the Jewish kids would put their heads down and just sit there quiet as a mouse, not making even one peep because they were trying to explain how Israel was wrong in trying to do this or that. You felt so guilty about it. Judaism was at fault, and the Jewish people were at fault. We actually had a lot of hatred toward news about Israel because we felt that we had nothing to do with Israel, and we were being blamed.

By 1975, the cumulative effects of propaganda about Israel and the continued unrest in Lebanon frightened Raisa's mother into selecting the United States.

> We were planning to go to Israel to rejoin our uncle, but he called us just before we were leaving and he said to us that, because of the war

> situation, both boys and girls—I was seventeen and my brother was twenty-three—would definitely be drafted. Our Mom said, "Unfortunately, I don't believe in that country so much to lose my two kids to it." So, we had to switch and go to the United States.

Many chose not to go to Israel for reasons which, in retrospect, seem flimsy even to themselves. Some were afraid of the weather, which many believe complicates health problems, and of the potential restrictions on their personal freedom. Polina Zilberman said:

> Actually we were going to go to Israel from the beginning, but then these rumors started to come. First of all, I had terrible migraines. Besides this, the rumor started to go around that if you wanted to move in Israel somewhere, you couldn't do this or that without permission, or that we would be without this or without that. We didn't want that kind of life. We didn't want to feel anti-Semitism but to be absolutely free. We never regret that we left Russia, oh, no. Never! But we regret not going to Israel all the time!

The journey to Vienna was fraught with tension. Many, who had never traveled beyond the Communist bloc, worried about the possibility of terrorists. Says Masha Dubinskaya.

> Just where we crossed the border between Rumania and Austria beautiful Israeli soldiers came to our train. They stayed and protected us from terrorists. We didn't have religion, but whatever happened in Israel, we [felt a kinship]. I never saw Israelis or heard before a Jewish song, but when I first heard the song, I started to be happy.

For Boris Akselrod and his family, traveling though Eastern Europe was a nightmare.

> I got my tickets to Czechoslovakia and from Czechoslovakia to Vienna, from Vienna to Italy. The road to Vienna was hell. They kicked us from the train as soon as we crossed the border, and my daughter was only three years old. We had three family members. The other passengers had a lot of suitcases, and the son had just came from the hospital. He had had a heart attack, and the mother was old so we were helping him get in and out of the train. Four or five times we were kicked off and on the train. A whole night, we were left in between the rails. It was a dark night, no lights. We didn't even know which way to go. It was Czechoslovakia, the most hostile country I'd ever seen. Finally, when we got to Vienna, everything completely changed. The people from HIAS met us; they brought us to the hotel. I

> think we were staying in Vienna for a week or so and then they sneaked us to Italy through the mountains!

For others, the actual train trip was less difficult than many had feared. Even so, all felt an enormous tension generated by their rejection of their homeland and the knowledge that they were being forced to make critical decisions about their future based on second-hand information, negative propaganda, and limited access to foreign media (cf. Paul and Jacobs 1981:103–104). Like all of the refugees, Genya and Shmuel Fein were met in Vienna by representatives of HIAS. Genya says:

> In Vienna they asked if you want to go to Israel or different countries. Those who were going straight to Israel went a couple days later. If you wanted to go to a different country, they put you in a hotel for ten days for you to decide what place you want to go. About Israel, we were so tired of politics in the Soviet Union that we didn't want to be involved in politics in Israel. We wanted to live in a free country and do what we wanted.

In contrast, Mark Sidur, the religious Zionist from Moscow, had never wavered in his decision to go to Israel. In Austria, however, he met with a representative of the Israeli government who forced him to reassess his options in terms of economic production. Mark's ultimate decision was particularly ironic because he had never defined himself in terms of his work but as a religious man.

> I asked him this question: I want to go to Israel. I have a degree from the University of Moscow in American Literature and English, years of working as an interpreter. Can I find a job, any job? I would go to a kibbutz. I would go to any job I could do. I was forty and was an extremely intelligent man. I said I spoke maybe six to eight languages, and he smiled. His response was: "Go to the States. You won't be able to find anything in Israel."

From Vienna those who had decided not to go to Israel moved on to Italy. There HIAS and other Jewish relief agencies provided small stipends and assisted in cutting though the bureaucratic paperwork of applying for refugee status in the United States. In addition, the Israelis continued to encourage people to make *aliya,* provided practical assistance, and conducted classes in Hebrew and Jewish studies. Leonid Silber appreciated this help.

> We felt like the Jewish organizations took care of us, but they did not push us. We were free, but we felt support, and we enjoyed this. It was a very good feeling when you leave a country, like we did from Russia, like an enemy. When we came to Vienna, right away we saw soldiers to protect us.

Even though Vadim Kirtsov and his family had little money, this enforced decompression period[9] while they were waiting for their documents became a vacation. Vadim says:

> When you are in transition, this transition gives you time to think about how you are going to do things. It gives you a firsthand understanding of how a democratic marketplace society can work. It was a valuable experience.

Because of her excellent English, HIAS hired Dina Alexander to work in the Italian office.

> In Rome it's very well organized. First of all HIAS processes your papers. One thing they needed was an explanation from you why you are requesting refugee status. Most people didn't know what to say. They were not clear on why they were leaving. Then after your paperwork is all ready, HIAS submits you to a counselor. The counselor asks you questions, and they screen you somewhat. Then you swear to be a good refugee! There were elements of [vocational counseling], but most people had to go to where the family was. By the time I was traveling, there was the assumption that you were going with your relatives. My brother got out before me and was in Hartford.

The willingness of the United States to admit many of the émigrés as refugees and to assist financially, coupled with the resettlement aid from HIAS abroad and Jewish organizations in many American cities, encouraged the majority to opt for what they assumed would be an easier freedom in the United States Promised interim stipends, medical care, English classes, and vocational assistance, they expected to find jobs in their fields, to fit into the economy at levels comparable to those they left behind, and to link into what they perceived as the good life of the American Jews.

Throughout this period (1973–1984) the choices made by individual Soviet Jews burgeoned into a major trend, with the high point coming in 1979 when 51,331 were permitted to leave (Dominititz 1997:119). The following year, however, less than half that number were issued exit visas, and by 1984, only 896 were allowed to emigrate. Why did the Soviet government suddenly curtail emigration, announcing that everyone who wanted to emigrate had already done so despite the estimated 400,000 who wanted to leave and the 20,000 who had been refused visas (Rothchild 1985:242)?

Explanations for the Soviet decision to reduce emigration permits during the 1980s were debated by American Jewish leaders, Israelis, and political experts. Some speculated that this change in policy resulted from Soviet fears of setting a precedent for other nationalities and/or the government's consternation over losing large numbers of well-educated professionals. At the same time, political considerations in Moscow and Washington—including pressures surrounding Afghanistan, President Jimmy Carter's boycott of the Moscow Olympics, and succeeding President Ronald Reagan's anti-Communist stance—may have contributed to the slowdown (Sachar 1993:920). Many, however, believed that the U.S.S.R. was retaliating for the perceived insult by the large number of emigrants who were eschewing Israel—acknowledged by the Soviets as the "historic Motherland" for Jews—in favor of other Western countries, particularly the United States.

Even with this drastic cut in the number of exit permits being issued—1,140 in 1985 and 904 in 1986—many Soviet Jews were hopeful that the political climate would improve. In 1987 the government reversed its emigration policy yet again and allowed 8,115 allowed to leave. The following year 18,961 received permits as did 71,005 in 1989 with the numbers continuing to rise into the 1990s (Dominitz 1997:119). It is clear that the trend begun by the religious and Zionist innovators after the Six Day War was not limited to that small group but had spread to all types of Jews regardless of their personal identification with Judaism per se.

Part III

THE PROMISED LAND, 1975–1984

9

Selecting New Strategies for the New World

> I did not choose Hartford. Hartford chose me. The only thing that I asked from HIAS was that I didn't want a big city. I think both Boston and New York were closed, which was just as well with me. Hartford was an incredible difference, not only from the Soviet Union but from Europe as well.
>
> —Zoya Kramer

Hartford: The New Context

Until the train rolled across the border into Western Europe, the overriding fear of many if not all of the émigrés, was that they would not be permitted to leave the Soviet Union. Since the focus of their lives had been reduced to this narrow vector, the sudden removal of this basic element threw many of those who were not going to Israel into a state of uncertainty and irresolution. For many the transition as they passed through Vienna and waited for documents in Italy was marked by disequilibrium as they began to refocus their priorities and reorganize their patterns of thought and behavior. Chief among the new possibilities was the ability to choose from a wide range of alternatives, and many were determined to employ this strategy to their advantage. In addition, many realized for the first time that the Jewish community was a competent institution, capable of operating on the international level and also of helping individuals cope with their personal disorganization. Thus, Jewish identity became an asset in terms of personal worth as well as of practical resettlement assistance.

In contrast to the constant conflict and maneuvering to manipulate the authority structure of the Soviet Union, satisfactory personal resettlement became the main goal of those immigrating to Hartford. Within this context were the interactions between newcomers and the agencies of the established Jewish community—particularly the Jewish Family Service, the religious education system, Mount Sinai Hospital, and the synagogues—and with the American volunteers who assisted them. As problems with housing and the acquisition of material necessities became secondary, they were forced to make unprecedented decisions about their children's educations and to fight for a place in the Hartford economy.

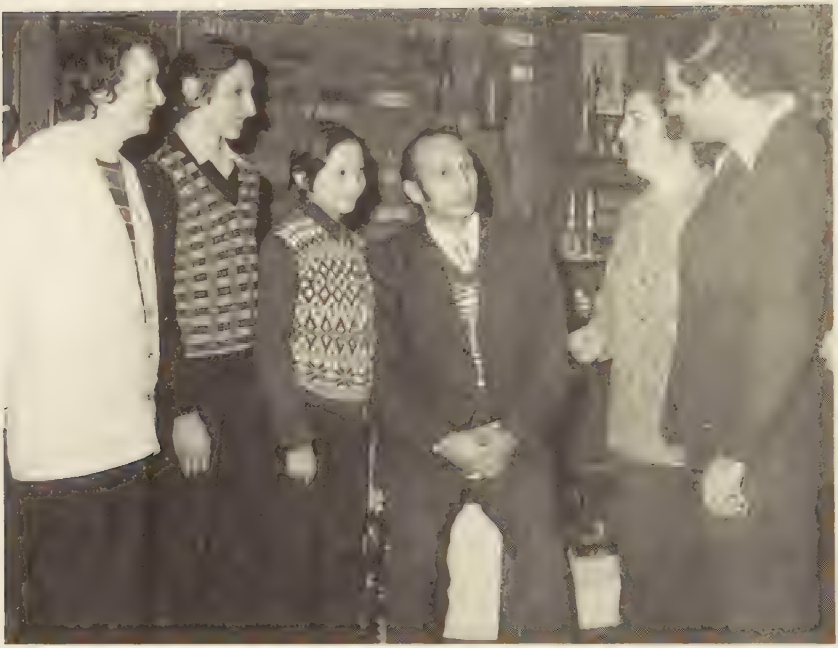


Figure 10. The Barzachs (left to right, Sophia, Peter, Eugene, and Israel), one of the first families to settle in West Hartford, meet with Sydna and Marvin Hyman.

Family and friendship networks developed over time as more families arrived, many of them sponsored by the early arrivals.

Although the internal politics of the Greater Hartford Jewish community may have affected the Soviet Jews as part of the community as a whole, with a few exceptions they did not join organizations or participate in decision making other than as part of groups focusing on their particular issues. American politics at every level had little personal connection with their new lives.

For the newcomers, the salient point in terms of identity was that instead of being labeled by negative ascription as in the U.S.S.R., they could, if they wished, now reclassify themselves. With the removal of anti-Semitism as a barrier, these nonreligious Jews—now living in a country where Judaism is a religion instead of a nationality—were free to choose whether or not to identify as Jews—and if so, in what manner.

The enormous national Jewish community effort to assist the Soviet Jews, generally called New Americans[1] by the resettlement agencies, was generated by fundamental Jewish values, as articulated by Karl D. Zukerman, director of the Soviet Jewish Resettlement Program of the Combined Jewish Federations in 1979.

> There is probably no aspect of the Soviet Jewish Resettlement Program which is of greater concern to the North American Jewish community than the extent to which our newest arrivals feel a Jewish identity and are involved in Jewish communal life. We are involved not merely in the rescue of fellow human beings, rewarding and important as that may be. We are involved in the rescue of our fellow Jews, a *mitzvah* of the highest order, so that we can preserve and strengthen the Jewish community. . . . It is our objective that these Jews will come to view their Jewishness as a positive factor in their lives, that they will act accordingly and thereby preserve and strengthen the Jewish people. We want them to participate in Jewish communal activity and life. We want them to provide themselves and their children with Jewish education. (Zukerman 1979:16)

Furthermore, American Jews with their heightened sensibilities of the Holocaust were determined to save endangered Jews anywhere in the world (Siegel 1988:26). This community mobilization was in sharp contrast to the situation during the early part of the twentieth century when immigrants themselves were expected to assist their relatives and *landsleit* with only occasional, minimal help from various agencies. The only direct family link in Hartford between these two immigrant groups was that of Yelena Akselrod and her great aunt, Rachel Cohen,[2] who illustrate this difference. As a young woman in 1922 Rachel had found adapting to America very difficult without any communal welcome or concrete aid. At that time, only Rachel's sister had helped by sending passage money to the family in Russia and then by offering them a temporary home until they could support themselves. By the time of the first arrivals from the Soviet Union in 1975, the Hartford Jewish community had set up a mechanism to facilitate their absorption. Michael Charney and his family were one of the first[3] to go through this process.

> Although we are happy that we ended up in Hartford, we did not choose Hartford. [In Italy the international Jewish relief agencies found] an organization in the United States to take us on and to help us while we were settling here for the first few months. You cannot end up in the United States unless you have somebody to sponsor you. We were sponsored by the Jewish Federation.

Resettlement began in the same way for each family with the Jewish Family Service (JFS), a professional social service agency under the auspices of the Greater Hartford Jewish Federation, charged with this task. Says Marvin Kay:[4]

> I was initially hired in the early 1970s as a social worker for the Jewish Family Service. At that time the immigration policy of the Soviet Union was changing to allow the Soviet Jews to leave the Soviet Union, and Hartford became one of the designated cities for resettlement. Hartford had a history of resettlement and was willing to take on this responsibility. I was given that responsibility along with my role of family counselor at the agency. There was no official policy per se regarding these folks, other than that I had to find housing for them. They were given allowances through the Federation, which also gave us a budget.

The synagogues, the Jewish Community Center, the day schools, Mount Sinai Hospital, and volunteers—primarily the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)[5] and members of the Organization Through Training (ORT),[6] which organized a volunteer English tutoring program at Beth David Synagogue—were also eager to become involved. Money for refugee resettlement came not only from the Federation—the umbrella organization of community charities and service groups—but eventually from the United Way and federal Block Grants as well.

As soon as the Jewish Family Service received a dossier for a new family from the international resettlement agency in Italy, Diane Goldschlager Prince, president of the Hartford NCJW, Barbara Ruderman, and Sharon Malofsky, the key organizers for the volunteer effort during the early years, began to prepare for their arrival. The NCJW volunteers searched for an apartment, alerted appropriate community agencies, and began to assemble donated goods to furnish the apartment. When each family stepped off the airplane in Hartford, a committee of JFS staff members and/or volunteers from the NCJW was waiting to welcome them. Although Diane Goldschlager Prince spoke no Russian or Yiddish, she was able to communicate with the newcomers, welcoming each refugee family with a bouquet of flowers. She says:

> We pretty much knew who they were. Some of them looked like an aunt of mine. I felt like it was family. [Meeting the families at the airport] was the best, most wonderful part of being either the Chairman of the Resettlement or the social worker, or later the Resettlement Coordinator of the Jewish Family Service. It was the joy that made all the hard work wonderful.

Even though they were the first Soviet Jews she had ever seen, Diane recognized Michael Charney's family immediately. Michael remembers what it was like to be a "pioneer family" and to put themselves into the hands of strangers who did not speak their language.

> As a matter of fact I am still very grateful to Diane. She's the one who recognized us at the airport. The volunteers helped us quite a bit. They asked us over to their houses for Jewish holidays, for meals. We met everyone's family: Diane's family, Sharon's family, and Marvin Kay's. We had a very warm reception. People were genuinely friendly and welcoming and curious. We did not communicate very well—hand motions and a few words—but I have very good feelings about the volunteers.

Initial Preoccupations: Interpreting the Alternatives

For those accustomed to cities with populations ranging from half a million to the more than ten million of Moscow, Hartford with its fewer than 140,000 people looked like a village, and West Hartford, the suburb where most of the newcomers settled, like a summer colony. Stella Chertkova's first impression of her early morning ride from Bradley Airport, through the back roads of central Connecticut was typical.

> This was strange—I have never seen anything like that in my life. We were passing street after street, traffic light after traffic light, and yet didn't see a single soul here, didn't hear a single sound except for the monotonous buzz of engines . . . Yet I knew there were people here. If nowhere else, they were certainly in the cars, although their quick purposeful movements and tightly fastened belts (they fastened one around me, too) only added to the feeling of a cosmos voyage. "These houses—each one of them is just for one family," I was told, and it was obvious that my guides or hosts (or who were they—these four or five women accompanying us on this trip?) expected me to be surprised. I was not. I knew years ago that families owned houses in the United States. If anything, I was surprised that they would call these wooden *dachas* standing in the middle of nowhere "houses." "They are probably nice in summer," I thought, "but I can't imagine why somebody would want to live in them in fall or winter." (Chertkova 1985:10)

Although West Hartford was a well-established suburb, the individual houses on green lots, the small apartment buildings rarely rising over four stories, and the wide empty streets disoriented the newcomers. Says Michael Charney:

> My whole family had an image of an American city, and we were very disappointed when we came to Hartford. They put us in the West Hartford Inn until they found us an apartment. We looked outside our windows and asked Marvin Kay, "Aren't there large, tall buildings in Hartford?" He said we were in West Hartford Center. We looked at each other as if to say, "Okay, when's the horse and buggy going to come by?" I grew up in a major city, and looking out our window was really disappointing. Finally Diane came, and she drove us to downtown Hartford where we saw a few tall buildings. We said, "Good, this makes us feel okay!"

Most of the first apartments were located near the Farmington Avenue-Prospect Avenue axis, which marks the Hartford-West Hartford border. There, the three- and four-story apartment buildings that line the main streets provided a selection of small apartments at relatively low rents. Near bus routes and Beth Israel and Beth David synagogues, where English classes and tutoring took place, this area was an ideal staging point for the newcomers' exploration of American life. Although many families lived in these apartments at various times between 1975 and 1983, it did not become a richly layered immigrant neighborhood like those of the turn of the twentieth century but was simply an assortment of unrelated apartments in the same general location.[7] Other families were placed wherever the volunteers could find a landlord who would accept the rent approved by the Jewish Family Service.

This lack of neighborhood cohesion among the New Americans was probably a result of the small numbers (364 over the span of almost a decade), their geographical distribution in the Soviet Union,[8] which created boundaries in Hartford as well, their prior experience living in mixed neighborhoods, the unavailability of nearby houses within their budgets, their lack of a need to develop specific immigrant organizations because of the availability of both Jewish and secular agencies, and their own disinterest in doing so (cf. Markowitz 1993). Almost all of the members of this group have moved at least once, some from outlying apartments to the Farmington-Prospect area, and others from apartments to a first home and in some cases to a second. The trend for all but the elderly has been to buy homes as soon as they could afford them. New American enclaves in larger cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles have developed along a substantially different pattern from that of Hartford. There, Russian-speakers have clustered together, forming the nucleus of large residential neighborhoods with some Russian-language businesses but, overall, without immigrant-sponsored community agencies (Gold 1997:261). Diane Goldschlager Prince recalls those early days when teams of volunteers worked together to prepare the apartments.

> We furnished approximately one hundred apartments from the attics and basements of all the women who were working. We would have a table from someone, a couch from somebody else, chairs from somebody else. The husbands of volunteers worked by loading furniture into station wagons. Beds were always supplied new.

Dina Alexander describes the busy volunteer who helped transport furniture to the new apartment.

> One volunteer came to my brother's house the day we arrived. She had brought us from the airport, then she ran and did something, and then she showed up short of breath saying that she was bringing the beds soon, and, "Don't go to bed yet." I had nothing better to do so I said, "Why don't I go with you, and I'll help you." She was cooking dinner, and her husband was taking care of all her home chores since she had to take care of our family.

In Shmuel Fein's first apartment everything was organized and in place.

> The Jewish Family Service and the Federation helped us a lot to settle here. First of all, everything was in the house. They found and furnished the apartment with everything including salt and a broom and clothing and new sheets, beds, pots, and even a refrigerator.

Although kitchens were stocked with basic foods, the refugees frequently enjoyed their first trips to the supermarket. Masha Dubinskaya appreciated the contrast between her Soviet shopping experience with long lines, limited choices, and small quantities doled out by clerks and the supermarket near her home.

> I liked the American supermarket. It was super for fruit and vegetables because we always had a problem in Russia with food. I was very, very happy when I could buy fruit or vegetables or chicken, something children could eat. At that time, we couldn't believe it. When my son saw a banana, he started to shake it. He couldn't wait until we went home. He ate a full bunch on the street. It made me so happy. Now he could eat what I couldn't give him before.

The fact that the Jewish Family Service and the NCJW volunteers had prepared their apartments allowed the refugees to place housing and shopping for daily necessities—primary sources of irritation and conflict in the U.S.S.R.—onto the back burner and to focus on the real work of settling into American life. Forced to reorganize their lives in every way and to search for new behavior patterns that would produce desired results, many suffered under the stress and pressure of trying to adapt rapidly to a completely new system despite their wish to integrate. Says Dina Alexander:

> My goal was to get out and I did! When that was all taken care of, the biggest problem I had after years of having a certain focus was that I lost it. My focus was very political. I meant to get out of that country, and all my effort was on understanding that country and dealing with what was wrong and making sure that my convictions were strong. Then I got out like a genie coming out of the bottle: NOW WHAT?

Exclusive of the critical issue of finding employment, which will be discussed in the next chapter, there were three main aspects of immediate adaptation to America. The first concerned learning the language,[9] the second with learning how to deal with the details of everyday life, and the third with determining where they wanted to fit into the variegated American mosaic.

The first aspect of adapting was realizing that their communication skills were far from adequate. Articulate and highly educated in Russian and sometimes in other languages as well, many were appalled by their own primitive English and their inability to speak fluently at a professional level.[10] However, as Diane Cohen who worked for several years as the teacher of the Jewish Family Service sponsored beginners' English as a Second Language class at Beth Israel, says:

> In some ways the learning of the language was the easiest because they knew they would have to struggle with it, but the culture shock was the bigger factor in the overall situation. Language was concrete and progressive, but knowing how to live in the United States was difficult.

Even as they attended English classes—which will also be discussed in the next chapter—and began to speak more fluently, many suffered from the knowledge that they would probably never lose their accents nor understand English in all of its nuances. This, they begin to realize, might always be a barrier between them and the American-born population.

Learning how to cope with daily life could be both frustrating and fascinating with an enormous range of things that disconcerted or bothered people during their initial transition to American life. For example, Siegel's respondents in Hartford and New Haven worried about isolation and loneliness, making friends, money, shopping, and child care (1988:95). In addition, insufficient public transportation in Hartford was one area that created a whole constellation of new problems with a variety of possible solutions. It had never occurred to the Soviet Jews that this would be problematic because they were accustomed to varied forms of cheap, readily available transport. Moscow alone has eleven train stations and four airports, and many large cities have subways as well as surface systems. In the Soviet Union cars were very expensive and frequently reserved for officials, and purchasers at that time often languished on waiting lists for as long as ten to fifteen years before a car was available. In addition, parking on the street was precluded because of theft. Spare parts were difficult to obtain, gasoline was very expensive, and breakdowns were frequent. David Vilensky, one of the few from this period who owned a car in the Soviet Union, parked in a garage several miles from his home and drove only for pleasure, never for commuting to work.

When they arrived in Hartford, many found that a number of employers were located outside the city, forcing them to learn to drive immediately and to buy cars for the first time. If they did not have cars, in some cases one for each spouse, they were effectively closed out of much of the labor market. Thus, practicing driving and studying for the licensing examination coupled with researching what kind of car to buy, finding a car, choosing insurance, and paying for everything became major obstacles, which worried many during the first few months. Nevertheless, after they—particularly the women—learned to drive, they were delighted with this new skill and wondered how they had ever managed before. Says Alla Vilensky, "Here I just run in my car, and I go where I like. Here I am like a free bird."

One facet of daily life that few had given any thought to was the popular culture and how they would react to it. Every apartment came equipped with a television—to facilitate the learning of English, according to the volunteers—but when the Soviet Jews flipped it on, they opened a window into an unexpected American world. Stella Chertkova, who had assumed that America was the land of Dreiser, Faulkner, and Salinger could not believe what she saw on television her first day in Hartford.

> A handsome young man with a flair of significance was presenting to the audience all kinds of goods, and some fidgeting anxious women with greedy eyes and hands were trying to guess their price. The women were biting their lips, jumping and screaming enthusiastically if they happened to be right, and the audience was also jumping and screaming, supporting each disappointment and victory. It must be a parody, I thought. It must be a parody—a display of the lowest human desires—explicit and triumphant! Disgusting! What else could it be? A real life? An entertainment? No, it would be inconceivable for a country of such great cinema and literary tradition, it couldn't be serious. I was confused. More so, because this strange show was interrupted frequently to give place to whole choruses of people of all the ages, sexes, and colors to sing happily and loudly boisterous and surprisingly silly songs about vacuum cleaners, orange juice, and breakfast cereals. (Chertkova 1985:12)

Although Irina Greenberg was surprised initially by the prevalence of sexual material and the crude advertisements on television, available for anyone of any age to watch, she appreciated the most basic element of the American media.

"Everybody here can choose which channel to turn on, what to read or which play to see, and that's a big advantage. You have choice." As many New Americans learned to exercise this choice, they enjoyed television programs of all kinds and were not bothered by their appeal to the popular market. The elderly Luries enjoy movies and quiz shows, seeing the game rather than the greed. Says Rosa:

> We like to watch TV because this is our school. Sometimes I miss a sentence, and I ask him, "You catch the sentence?" We sit with the dictionaries. We like to watch Kirk, *Star Trek,* and questions and answers like *Chain Reaction.* They have a lot of pictures, and we don't have a problem understanding.

Furthermore, the neutral or positive portrayal of Jews on American television was new and reassuring to people like Ina Eyot who had rarely seen anything positive about Jews in the popular culture of the Soviet Union.

> You know what was a big shock for us: first time I saw a movie about Jewish people or I saw a comedian saying in a heavy Jewish accent, "You know, I have a nice Jewish goil . . . " Never, never, never can you see this on TV or radio or in concert in Russia. They tried to hide Jewish identity there. I said, "Nick, look at this: a movie about Jewish people, about Jewish holidays on TV." I was in shock! In Russia, NEVER!

Since many New Americans were from large sophisticated cities with readily accessible theaters, museums, and concert halls, and had read widely in Russian and Western literature, they considered themselves to be cultured European intellectuals (cf. Simon 1997:53). Even the least educated had been exposed only to selected American cultural events and had seen little of the mass media. Zoya Kramer, for example, was quite surprised by the low level of some aspects of American entertainment and popular culture (cf. Simon 1997:62) and with the irresponsibility of some newspapers, but she quickly learned to determine what was appropriate for her family and how to deal with inappropriate blandishments from the media.

> At first I think I believed everything I saw on American television, because in Russia the only news about national affairs that we could believe was from Voice of America. One of the most amazing things about this country was the existence of papers like the *Enquirer,* because they never talked about it in Russia. Whatever we had access to was of very high quality, and I must give them credit that they picked the best American movies and translated the best American books. The Voice of America that we listened to sometimes was also quite credible, so the existence of this popular culture in this country was really news to me and very difficult to

> digest. That is the other side of democracy. When you grow up in a totalitarian regime, you think democracy allows everything you consider to be true, but not what someone else considers to be true. When I left Russia, I hoped that I would not have to fight the society as I did Russia in terms of bringing up my son. I hoped that here I would be able to trust the society to bring him up, that I would be in agreement with it. I found here that this was not the case either. It was a totally different struggle, but nonetheless, just as sad. I have to work very hard to make him stay away from all the obvious attractions of this culture that are so appealing to children.

The third aspect of adapting to Hartford was deciding how to fit into the established community. With so many choices available, each individual had to interpret the surrounding world and then to find an appropriate niche. Understanding the American mentality in general and the American Jewish mentality in particular was often a daunting task, and many thought that they would never learn to understand what went on behind the smiling American faces, which seemed closed to the intimate friendships they had cherished at home. With little choice but to adapt, they did, interpreting the new stimuli that constantly bombarded them, learning new skills, and continually making choices. Although their previous experience did not always give them the information they needed to select effectively between two alternatives in the new context, they analyzed their options, made decisions, lived with the results or, in some cases, made new decisions to correct whatever had not worked out as they had expected. Irina Greenberg reflects on this process and the choices involved.

> When you experience something, it's always different from what you think about it. For example, having much freedom is not always easy. You have to make your choices. We didn't have to make many choices in our lives, so some people found it difficult. I found it challenging, and I didn't mind. We had to learn a lot before we made a choice, and a lot of energy went into little things we didn't have to think about before—like what insurance to buy and what car to buy. Those are things that took a lot of time.

Mark Sidur believes that this process of making the early choices was particularly difficult for Soviet refugees, more so than they would have been for many Americans.

> In Russia, your life is regulated, has been regulated from the very beginning until the day you die. For Russians, if you're given choices and you don't know how to make the choices, what is the point of having a choice? I put in front of you five bottles with labels in Russian; one would say poison. You make a choice. You don't know Russian; you can't under-

> stand how to make the choice. This is the way they look at America because they have been taught to believe that there is one given truth. It makes life much easier.

Because of the difficulty in selecting between early alternatives without adequate information and in not always understanding how to cope with the initial challenge of resettlement, the first families who had emigrated without their customary support systems were forced to depend on the JFS staff, particularly Marvin Kay, and the volunteers. As time passed, personal networks began to develop among the refugees (cf. Siegel 1988), and individuals began to share their methods of mastering the new environment with each other and with the even greener newcomers.

The Volunteers: A Personal Invitation to Jewish Community

The basic theme of resettlement assistance provided by the Jewish community—primarily by the Jewish Family Service and the volunteers in Hartford—focused on ethnicity and Jewish identity. With one exception,[11] members of other national or religious groups were not sponsored by the Jewish agencies unless they were members of otherwise Jewish families. Being Soviet Jews, then, was the only criterion for assistance, and for many who had never perceived their official identity as anything other than a burden, this new orientation was refreshing. The warm welcome accorded to the Nisinov family, for example, was in marked contrast to the anti-Semitism they had experienced before their emigration. Teenager Raisa began to view being Jewish in a new light.

> We felt so free. All of sudden being Jewish was an asset. American Jews could not understand that at all because they were brought up to Jewish Federation, to Jewish community. All the people around us who were helping us were Jewish, and being Jewish was the best thing in the world! Oh my God, if there is a God, being Jewish pays off!

Although a few early arrivals had connections with people[12] who had left the Soviet Union during the period of New Immigration (1881–1930) or after World War II, these elderly family members were generally unable to assist their relatives in any substantial way, leaving that task to the organized Jewish community. In addition to meeting the refugees at the airport and assisting with housing, volunteers took on special assignments such as shopping, cooking the first dinner left for the newcomers in their new apartments, driving people to appointments, or mediating between the refugees and various agencies. Since volunteers in the 1970s were not assigned to specific families (as would be the case

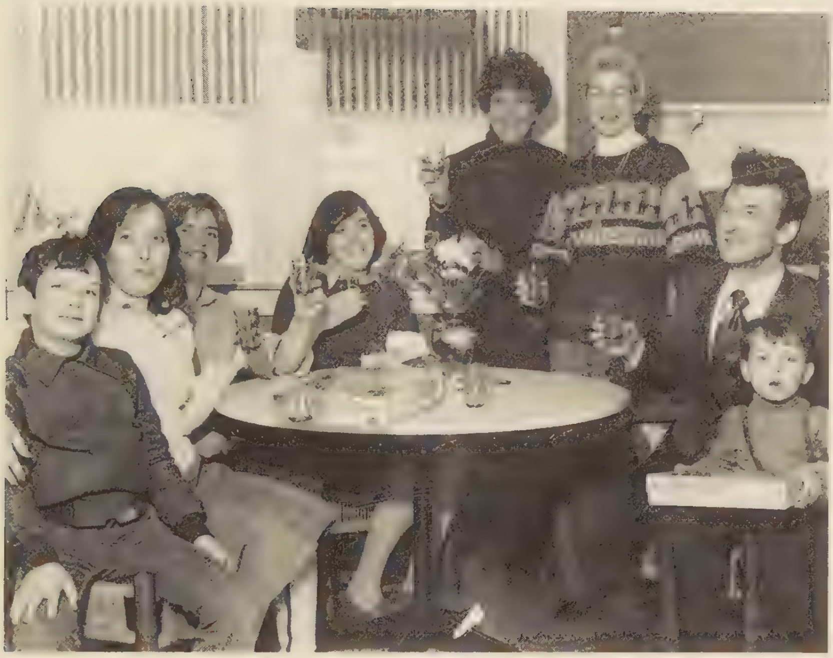


Figure 11. Volunteers from the National Council for Jewish Women toast the Donskoy family as they move into their new apartment. From the left are Edward Donskoy and his mother Elina, volunteers Sharon Malofsky, Barbara Steinfeld, Diane Goldschlager Prince, and Barbara Ruderman, and Mark and Dimitri Donskoy.

after 1989), an ever-changing group assisted them. Some drifted off after helping once or twice, but others remained with a specific family for a longer period.

Most of the volunteers were American-born, but a few, such as Ida Block, served as a link between the early immigrants and their successors. Recalling how difficult it had been to be a dislocated newcomer in an alien world, she was able to assist the New Americans in ways not available to the younger American volunteers. Ida was eventually honored for her many years of volunteer work, particularly with the Jewish Family Service.

> When they started to bring over the immigrants from Russia in the 1970s, sometimes I'd go to the airport at 6:00 in the morning with a social worker to receive them. As a rule, they have social workers that do not speak Yiddish so I used to help them a great deal that way. I encouraged the new people to become citizens. I used to call into the houses. "How are you? Do you need anything? If you do, here's my number. And now say to me, 'Thank you for calling'" in English. You'd be surprised how they learned that. (Cohen, 1983)

From the beginning it was evident that the volunteers—imbued with the spirit of community and focusing on the rescue of captives—and the Soviet newcomers approached their interactions from vastly different perspectives. The Soviet Jews, for example, expected to be welcomed as "long-lost relatives" and accepted immediately on the same social level as their American mentors. The Americans, in turn, frequently considered them pushy and demanding and not "real" Jews (Simon 1997:78). Although many warm relationships developed, it was inevitable that conflict, generally expressed in terms of disappointment or bruised feelings, would occur. Everything was complicated by the lack of communication with even those who spoke good English interpreting American behavior in light of the Soviet collective experience and occasionally drawing the wrong conclusions (cf. Siegel 1988:173). Kosmin (1990:5–6) explains this difference:

> When the concerned American Jews and the average refugee from the Soviet Union came face to face in 1979, there was an ambivalence among many on both sides, despite the acknowledgment of mutual kinship, along with a cultural gulf and a lack of shared assumptions, [particularly about religion and Israel], outlook, and experiences. . . . To the naturally asymmetrical relationship between wealthy and powerful hosts and poor and dependent immigrants were added tensions based on the differences between people connected with different patterns of Jewish identity raised in American and Russian culture and between groups raised in capitalist and socialist environments. The cultural complications tended to disappoint and embarrass both sides and reduce the ability of the Jewish tie to outweigh

> the other. . . . Inevitably, as in all systems where one group gives and another receives, tensions arose.

The American Jews, including many in Hartford, expected the newcomers to be grateful for both the material assistance and the advice (Simon 1997:75) and to blend into the Jewish scene immediately by participating in religious and community organizations and behaving according to the social patterns established by the largely middle-class Connecticut Jews. What the Americans did not realize was that their model of Jewish community—based on American collective memory and lifeways—was not at all congruent with that of the Soviet Union. In addition, the newcomers were now confronted with multiple American definitions for the "authentic" Jew and were forced to reconstruct a Jewish identity for themselves within the new context. Even so, their previous Soviet Jewish identity remained the filter through which they viewed their new options and contemplated their new relationships with the various aspects of their new world.

For some American Jews, the Soviet Jews were not Jewish enough, and there was an undercurrent of disappointment that this group was somehow less committed to Jewish life because its members had selected America over Israel. While the American Jews were interested in saving Soviet Jewry per se, many were more than a little uncomfortable with individual Soviet Jews (Rothchild 1985:277). Hartford community activist Robert Fishman recalls this situation.

> We were constantly fighting the battle between activists who felt that the purpose of the movement was getting Soviet Jews out of the Soviet Union to make *aliyah* [immigration to Israel] and those who wanted freedom and free choice [to select any country that would take them]. Hartford stuck up for free choice at the national meetings. Those were hot debates! Then we had to bridge that gap [between those activists and the New Americans] because the feeling was that if you're activist, you still wanted most people to go to Israel. So, therefore, if you cozied up to the people who came here, you'd be sending a mixed message, and that was kind of tricky. But, I think we handled that fairly well. Although I must admit that some of the activists had no interest in the Russian community that came here. I wasn't that way, but I know that some folks kept their distance.

The New Americans, on the other hand, were generally so consumed by the challenge of resettlement that they did not even realize that American Jews were thinking about religious and philosophical issues or Zionist behaviors.

Because of their previous experience with Soviet government agencies and entitlements, some New Americans tended to treat the Jewish Family Service as if it were a Soviet bureaucracy, demanding services and material goods they felt were their due. Despite the Communist collective ethic, people—as individuals—have had to fight to achieve or acquire everything they had in the U.S.S.R., leading to this type of persistent, aggressive behavior, which had produced visas and propelled them out of the Soviet Union. This did not work in America, alienating those who were trying to assist them (cf. Simon 1997:78).

Later, as the numbers increased and the resettlement process became more complex, the JFS developed a conceptual framework for assisting those who had lost everything—psychologically as well as all their material goods—to acknowledge, accept, and participate in the reality of the new American situation. Since the JFS was aware of the confrontational strategies used by all Soviet citizens to wrest anything from the system, it drew up, according to former Director, Philip Wiener, a series of consistent, written guidelines designed to avoid any appearance of bias or favoritism. Resettlement workers were also trained to avoid being co-opted into the Soviet system by neither responding to aggressive tactics nor succumbing to pity.

Unlike the community-minded Jews who emigrated from Russia at the turn of the century and volunteered for the good of the group as part of their personal participation in Jewish life, many Soviet Jews were unable to relate to this basic Jewish value of altruistic charity. Therefore, the role of the volunteers who spent their time helping strangers with little expectation of immediate return was difficult for the New Americans to comprehend. Additionally, that these were not personal friends became apparent and painful when the volunteers moved on to assist newer arrivals. Although Zoya Kramer was able to piece together the practical goals of the volunteers, she found it difficult to fathom the larger picture.

> There is no Russian concept of volunteers, none at all. I think the emphasis of the volunteer organizations, the Jewish Family Service, was on helping us to settle down here in practical matters, to learn the language, to learn the customs, [rather than on helping us integrate socially into the community]. That was their primary goal, and I did not understand that for a while, so expectations were different on my side, and I guess the other party's.

Dina Alexander, who had worked for HIAS in Italy, was hired by JFS to translate and generally mediate between the agency and the refugees.

> Everybody just didn't understand what the interest was, what was driving the volunteers. We thought they were toying with this, especially at the beginning. There were a lot of misunderstandings because the refugees who came here looked at Jewish Family Service and the volunteers as if they were representative of the government. They couldn't figure out that the JFS was funded as a voluntary agency. Nobody explained it to them until I told them. JFS held a meeting, and they explained things.
>
> In addition, the volunteers had a list of things that were an absolute must for the family that had just arrived: a salt shaker, a pepper shaker—

> things that I probably didn't even have at home like, for example, an ironing board. Instead of asking or looking, they assumed that we couldn't live without a radio or television. They had a whole list of things, which was very lovely of them, but they were giving away things that were not that important, and then they were sort of surprised that people were expecting more! When they started cutting down on those things, there was some sort of dissent because people didn't know where it was coming from or didn't care. Also, there were Soviet Jews who felt that there was a lot more money that American Jews had given to us than we were getting.

Although some refugees did not worry about relying on strangers for help during the initial adjustment period, Boris Akselrod was ambivalent—both grateful for the assistance his family received and distressed by the need to accept charity. For competent, active people such as the Akselrods, dependency was difficult, and as soon as they were able to do so they became independent, eventually becoming mentors for even newer newcomers.

> The Jewish Family Service helped us. Oh yes! We will never forget the volunteers. The door didn't close when we came to our apartment. Every five ten, fifteen minutes people brought us clothes and food and wished us the best. Bette Myerson[13] was a big help. Bette was good to everyone. She was doing a dirty job, and everybody else was taking pictures, but Bette was washing floors and painting walls. The whole Russian community loved her.
>
> In Russia it's different, and I just want to clear the air here because a lot of people probably were turned off by the Russians' behavior, because even if Russian people could use this stuff, to take what's no good for you any more and give it to someone else, degrades them. That is why a lot of people were talking about it. We had the same feeling, but we didn't express it. Because [the volunteers and the JFS before Dina Alexander and other bilingual staff members were hired] didn't speak Russian, nobody was able to explain this behavior and the motives people had toward us, and we used to have hostile feelings. We couldn't understand why they were bringing us old clothes. We had our own clothes, but Americans probably thought about the stories of their grandparents—how they came, and they didn't have anything—and they were trying to help us. They thought that we were the same way. We were much more culturally advanced and more educated. Most of the Jewish people in Russia had very good lives, materially speaking. They used to buy clothes in the black market, probably not American clothes, but they could afford some things normal Russian people could not.

Nevertheless, volunteer Evelyn Alberts[14] believes that the good will and concrete assistance provided by the American volunteers were pivotal in easing the resettlement of the New Americans.

> I think that most of the people appreciated everything that we did for them and that they looked on us as friends. I think many of us have made friendships that we still hold onto. It adds a dimension to your own life. I saw my role as English teacher and friend. The volunteers had a meeting once a month with the JFS to discuss some of the progress and some of the needs. I figured out how to handle some things from this contact, but the rest was instinct and the person involved.
>
> The New Americans depended on the American volunteers in order to make friends. With some I did have personal relationships. A young man and his wife came here with his mother and a two-year-old child. The wife was pregnant with a second child. When they first came, I took them places, I visited them a great deal in their home, and when the children needed to go to the dentist or the doctor, I used to drive them, and I entertained them. They came to a Passover seder. I was sort of their American mother. If they needed anything, they called on me. They had always had dreams of having a Jewish wedding, and arrangements were made at Tikvoh Chadoshoh with Rabbi Bodenheimer for them to have a wedding service. The Sisterhood of Tikvoh Chadoshoh made a very festive, beautiful wedding. They had a *huppah* a traditional wedding canopy, and their dreams were realized.

The appreciation accorded to Evelyn Alberts by "her family" was typical of the response of many of the New Americans, a trend that continued throughout this period.[15] Max and Zena Epsthein had left everything behind except for clothing for a sick child, arriving in Hartford with only a single outfit apiece. Says Zena:

> Life started for us just from the scratch. A lot of people helped us: people from the Federation, Jewish Family Service, and from Beth David Synagogue at night, Evelyn Alberts. We had very good volunteers from the beginning to support the whole family. They were amazing people. I don't know if we can ever pay them back. They were like parents for us when we came. They tried anything and everything to comfort us, to make our lives easier in the beginning.

Although Evelyn Alberts received enormous positive feedback from her volunteer work and made friends who have remained close to her for more than 15 years, she also knew about the undercurrents of dissatisfaction, but she did not take them personally or feel that they reflected on the quality or importance of the work done by the volunteers.

> Most understood the role of the volunteers, but some of them may not have. Most knew that people were trying to make them feel comfortable and to accept them into a different culture. I think that they all had a lot of

> courage to leave their country and to come to a new culture, and to try to learn a new language. I never personally had people complain that I did not do enough, but I do know that there was a certain amount of jealousy among people, and I think comparisons were made to what other cities did compared to Hartford. Friends in other cities would write and say, "We got X number of dollars" from the JFS or HIAS or somewhere else, and they would think, "How come we don't get that kind of money here?" I think one or two families moved away because of that, but on the whole, basically, most of them have been reasonably satisfied with what they have. Of course, the people who came earlier got a lot more than the later people because at first there were only a few and so the money went further.[16] Now, with so many people coming, they have to spread it out more as loans rather than outright grants. I think that most of them understand that.

Diane Goldschlager Prince, who directed the volunteer effort, sums up what she believed was the intangible importance of the volunteer program and the inevitable culture clash that accompanied its implementation.

> Volunteers made a difference because they provided the role models of the Jewish community in the United States that these people needed. This program had its excellent points. The main negative aspect of volunteers was that they showed such caring and the people were so receptive that the people who resettled felt uncomfortable when the volunteer involvement lessened in their lives. I didn't find out until years later when they were able to communicate with me that some people felt that maybe they had done something wrong. Some of them felt a little bit left out when at first they were very much part of somebody else's family, and then as they became more proficient in language and they had their jobs and their family life picked up, the volunteers went on to another family. Some people retained those communications on Passover, on holidays, and even now some people still have those same families coming to them. But it was unrealistic to expect that this would occur with everyone who came.

The maturity of the Jewish community with its competent professional agencies and the general affluence and willingness of the Jewish population to provide both time and money for the benefit of the community was in direct contrast to the small amounts of aid available from the fragmented community services and the limited assistance provided to immigrants by their very poor family and friends at the turn of the twentieth century. Without the current federal safety net, which includes Medicaid, Section 8 housing assistance, and long-term stipends for the elderly as well as some funds specifically designated for resettlement—accessed, processed, and augmented by the Jewish community—the New Americans would have experienced the same poverty as their predecessors. This, then, would have limited their ability to move as rapidly into the American economy, where they have tended to become mobile to a remarkable extent. This pulling together of the Jewish community, which centered around the role played by the Jewish Family Service and the volunteers, to welcome the Soviet Jews was instrumental in facilitating their successful absorption as New Americans.[17] Despite the cultural gaps and the ever-present dissatisfactions and complaints, not only were most of the New Americans appreciative of the community assistance but they adopted the behavior model of the American Jews and carried it over as they became sponsors for later groups of refugees. They did not, however, become instant "American Jews," integrating into the Hartford Jewish community at both personal and organizational levels as many in both groups had hoped they would do.

10

Incorporating New Variables

> Our people still believe in education. In Russia they say a Jewish kid is the one who goes to school or college or the university. Education. It is something that is inbred in Jews for thousands of years because education is a *mitzvah.* Throughout our history if you were religious, you needed to study. It is not a question of pride or being stupid, able or unable. It is your duty as a Jew.
>
> —Mark Sidur

Education: Making Choices for the Children

With ethnicity now removed as the critical variable in terms of the types, amount, and quality of education available to Jewish students, many parents felt a new pressure to choose the most appropriate education for their children. Given the importance of education within the Jewish value structure and as preparation for significant occupational achievement, parents struggled to understand the options available in Hartford even though they knew that they did not understand all of the ramifications of the various alternatives.

Even before the initial stages of culture shock began to wear off, parents of elementary and middle-school-aged children were required to make their first major decision of whether to send the children to public school or to a Jewish day school. If they chose the former, they also needed to decide if the children would attend a supplemental Jewish school as well. High school students had little choice because there was no Jewish high school in Greater Hartford at that time nor was there much religious education for teenagers who had not come through the system.

It was clear to parents and students alike that no matter which alternative they selected, mastering English was essential. Thus, the immediate task on arriving in Hartford for all but the elderly was to find an appropriate educational institution and immerse themselves in English. Not only did they perceive English as an economic necessity (cf. Chiswick 1997:233–60) but often as a significant avenue for reasserting themselves in their occupations and regaining their lost prestige and position. Says Marvin Kay:

> There were some schools of English-language training run by the state through the city that allowed our folks to participate, and we were able to get a small number of our families attending these. These were existing schools that assisted immigrants, basically the Spanish speakers who were probably Puerto Ricans. For the most part none of the New Americans had any English-language skills except for some of the younger kids.

Later the Jewish Family Service realized that these courses and the weekly tutoring sessions run by ORT volunteers at Beth David Synagogue were not geared toward moving professionals into the work force rapidly enough. By the end of the 1970s as the numbers increased, the JFS addressed this problem by starting a small school at Temple Beth Israel. Diane Cohen became involved immediately.

> It was survival English. The students that I received had absolutely zero for English background. We started with very basic sentences and their own environment: things around them in the room, greetings, conversations between themselves, things they might encounter outside the class, the telephone, clothing. Survival skills! Hopefully, by the end of the time that I spent with them, they would have enough language to communicate in English. Some had more of a facility for learning a new language quicker. I think it had a lot to do with how many languages they were exposed to before coming to the class. It seemed that the women picked it up a little more rapidly than the men. I don't know why. I had mostly men in my classes; the women seemed to come in with more English and at a higher level and move to the higher levels more quickly. I think it had to do with the fact that men had the extra burden of responsibility of having the need to support the family, to get a job as soon as possible. The more pressure a person seemed to have, the less they seemed to be able to concentrate on language. They were frustrated! I remember one instance where my young children came with me to class. One gentleman came up to me and said, "They think I'm stupid!" I said, "No, why should they think that?" He said, "I'm a grown man learning A-B-C!" The students felt very embarrassed by the situation they were in. They realized English would be difficult, but realizing it intellectually and actually being in the situation are two different things.

For the children, learning English was the first step toward meeting their parents' high expectations. As with adults, some learned easily while others struggled. Michael Charney, who had studied English for several years in Lvov, and Alex Epsthein, who had not yet started first grade in Kishinev, had opposite experiences at Hebrew Academy where Michael was placed in the seventh grade and Alex in the first. Michael says:

> I think the biggest thing was that I learned English the right way. I did not pick it up off the streets; I did not pick up the bad habits. So I had very good luck with English. There was a bunch of professors from Yale, linguists, who were doing a study when I was at Hebrew Academy, and they were trying to see if I would lose my accent. They made me listen to all sorts of records and had all sorts of sessions with me to see how well I could pick up English. They made me do this about three to four hours a day. I got tired of listening to the tapes and started listening to the Beatles! They started doing tests, and I was developing a British accent. They were a little bit curious why that was happening.

Alex Epsthein, on the other hand, floundered with two new languages to learn. Zena says:

> Our son started at Hebrew Academy, but he never went to school in Russia, so he didn't know anything. Everything for him was new: new Hebrew, new English, and he knew only Russian. It was very hard for a kid seven years old.

Over the years many New Americans initially selected the Jewish day schools because they wanted the children to become their bridges to Judaism. The task, then, became one of choosing between the Conservative Solomon Schechter and the Orthodox Hebrew Academy, both of which offered scholarships. The immediate, apparent philosophical difference was that the latter—although it is modern Orthodox—was more rigorous in its adherence to traditional Judaism and separates boys and girls for some religious instruction and activities. The Charneys chose to send their sons to the Hebrew Academy. According to Michael, adjusting to an American school with American schoolmates who could not understand the difficult transition he had made was not always easy. Even so, he had few problems adapting academically.

> When I left Lvov, in that school system I finished fifth grade and a quarter of the sixth grade. In Russia in the fifth grade you already have biology, chemistry, physics, geography. When I took geography in America, I did not even open a book. I knew all the states, the only thing I had to learn was the capitals because I knew all the rivers, all the countries. American history was the other course I had to learn, but math, physics I had straight A's all through high school. I did not open a book until I got to college, basically. I had the most advanced courses in Hall High School. I had everything the Hebrew Academy offered. I did very little. As a matter of fact when I got to college, it was a rude awakening because I had to learn how to study.

The Silbers selected Solomon Schechter for their daughters.

> We sent them to a Jewish day school because my kids should know what we didn't know, what we missed. When Tanya was in sixth grade, a couple from Israel came, and she sat in our house and she talked Hebrew much better than I speak English! She got first place in a Bible contest. She's a bright girl.

Choosing the other educational alternative, some families by-passed the religious day schools completely in favor of the public schools. Many in this group, however, enrolled the younger children in after-school or Sunday Hebrew programs. This was the case with the Dubinskys. Like other high school students, however, their older child did not receive any religious education. Masha says:

> My son went to Hall High School, and my daughter to Whiting Lane School. I put her in a [supplemental] religious school because I wanted my children to learn. We didn't have any religious education. I pushed her. She went six years to religious school.

By the end of the first or second school year, another set of alternatives faced those parents who had opted for religious education: Should the children remain in the day schools or should they transfer, primarily to the West Hartford public schools? Two intertwining factors played a part in this decision. The first focused on the language: Were the children learning English quickly enough to meet their own and their parents' expectations? Max and Zena Epsthein struggled with this question, finally removing Alex from the Hebrew Academy because he was so confused by the two new languages that he was not learning either one.

The second factor determining which type of school the children should attend depended on how the family decided to allocate its money, particularly in terms of housing. This became a salient issue as scholarships[1] were reduced or eliminated in order for the schools to assist both newer immigrants and needy American children. As parents who were beginning to become economically productive adopted the American value of home ownership, the day schools assumed that their finances were improving and that they would be willing to allocate some funds for education. Unaccustomed to paying for education under the Communists, parents were frequently unwilling to change their behavior patterns, particularly since many lived in West Hartford with its excellent public schools. Although Boris and Yelena Akselrod couched their decision to take their daughter out the Hebrew Academy in terms of broadening her education in a secular American world, the real issue was how they chose to spend their money.

> Marisa went to the Hebrew Academy from kindergarten to the fourth grade. Then she went to the public school. We had some arguments and disagreements with the Hebrew Academy administration. At that time we bought a house, and we couldn't afford to pay for her education. We are

> living in a Christian world here—it's not Israel—and the best school probably or the right school would be a normal public school. She would be among the Christian people as well as the Jews. It would vary her Jewish heritage more because we were teaching her at home always. She went to the Beth Israel [Reform religious school]. We were happy with that. She used to go to Camp Shalom, [the Greater Hartford Jewish community camp], then different Jewish camps when she was older.

The general trend, then, was for parents who had placed their younger children in one or the other day school—primarily the Hebrew Academy—eventually to withdraw them if language acquisition or resource allocation became an issue. Even so, many continued to send the children to supplemental religious schools for several additional years. For teenagers in West Hartford there were few options unless they moved or were willing to pay for expensive private education. With attendance at the West Hartford high schools determined by residence, most were automatically enrolled in Hall High, the school serving the district where most of the apartments were located. Few, if any, received formal religious training.

Meanwhile, those parents who had selected public schools for their young children also began to consider buying houses. According to Kosmin (1990:45), income for all American Jews is a critical predictor of Jewish affiliation, in that larger disposable incomes permit families to select relatively expensive Jewish neighborhoods near good schools or to pay tuition at the day schools as well as to join local synagogues and other Jewish organizations where Jews mingle. Among the alternatives for the Soviet Jews were buying in the West Hartford Jewish neighborhoods where the more prestigious public schools were located, the houses larger, and the prices higher; choosing another town where they could afford housing and the schools were acceptable; or selecting a town with poor public education and with low-priced houses. Determined to provide the best education for her son and reluctant to withdraw him from his excellent public and Hebrew schools in West Hartford, Dina Alexander wrestled with these issues.

> I chose East Hartford because I didn't have the money to live in West Hartford. There came a time when our finances were such that we were ready to buy a house, but not where we wanted it. The choice was not easy to make because I realized I was doing something that was not very good for my son. I was concerned about the East Hartford public schools, and he did go there for two years. It built character! I would have preferred for him to be with Jewish kids, but I lived in all kinds of conditions, and I know that you have to learn to get along with different people. He learned to stand up for himself, and he learned karate. He was one of the very few Jewish kids in the school, and he walked around with a violin. The Black kids thought it was the most hilarious thing ever. On Passover he went to the cafeteria and

> said, "This is Passover. Why don't you have matzo?" They were very nice and said, "Sorry, sorry," and the next day they brought the matzo. They showed him the box, and it said "Not for Passover," and he said, "Can't you read?" I thought it was great! I know it was a little obnoxious, but I thought to myself, it took guts to do that, and I like that. My fear was that he was always small, and if he was also scared, that would be terrible.
>
> Then I could just see that he was not getting too much education, but I did not know that in this country you could go to private school and not have enough money for it. I knew about college scholarships, but I thought to myself if you don't have the money, you don't go. But I was getting a little upset with that school. They didn't challenge him enough. I asked around, and someone said that Loomis-Chaffee was a very good private school in another suburb, and I called them up and said, "What would you say to a person who couldn't afford tuition?" They were very nice and said that their philosophy was that if a youngster is good school material, he can study regardless. I do pay, but it's reasonable. So he went to Loomis.

While most of the parents were making decisions for their children's educations based on what they perceived as being most beneficial in relation to their financial resources, it was up to the children to learn the new language, absorb new subjects, and integrate into the life of the school. High school students were faced with the task of adapting much more quickly than their younger siblings so that they could achieve at a level that would meet their parents' aspirations. Many of the teenagers in the earliest families had exceptional ability and were able to do this relatively easily. Others, who had been ordinary students in the Soviet Union, found the transition into the American schools more difficult.[2] Genya Fein discusses her daughter's adjustment to the educational system and her achievements.

> She was always a very good student, one of the best, but when she left Russia, she didn't know English exactly. She knew a few words and how to read, pronunciation, and a little grammar. However, her vocabulary was almost zero. She came here and started to study in the tenth grade at Hall High School. Six months she didn't talk; she did not open her mouth. However, even during these six months, she would get an A in each subject! I don't know how she could do that. In the third year, her compositional English—her spelling—was one of the best. I was really surprised because my language through the many years is not like hers after three! She graduated from high school with high honors—4.0. She was accepted in a few colleges, and she chose Columbia University. She studied mechanical engineering in undergraduate school, and after that she was hired by AT&T, which paid for her masters degree at MIT.

Nicolai and Ina Eyot's son Yuri, who was also of high school age when he arrived, integrated into Hall High in a different way, one more in keeping with the popular culture of the school. He has since completed college, found a good job, married an American Jewish woman, and lived up to his parents' expectations.

> Yuri studied and learned English very fast. He was a very good soccer player, one of the ones in the newspaper all the time. When my son went to school, there was only him and one other Russian guy. They played on the team and Americanized very fast.

Meanwhile, Irina Greenberg's son was making his own plans. Although the Greenbergs had emigrated because of their fears that their sons' education would be truncated in Russia, their son did not pursue the type of career prized by his parents.

> He graduated from Hall High and went to a community college for two semesters. Then he decided that he wanted to work. He quit college, and now he's working. I realize that the values that we had for many generations were not important values for him. The values are different here, and as much as I want him to do what I think is important to do in life, I realize that everybody has rights to achieve his own.

This type of freedom for young people to make educational decisions parents believe are not in their children's best interests has been an area of culture shock and generation gap for many. With choices limited in the Soviet Union—particularly for Jews—evaluation and decision making frequently do not generate new conditions immediately, providing time for further family analysis and succumbing to parental pressure. Thus, many New Americans were concerned that the freedom allowed American children would affect their own children's futures. Says Boris Akselrod:

> In Russia, we were pushed to study the classics. Here, in school you study whatever you choose. You can be whatever you want. It's too much freedom for the youngsters. The parents should, I think, limit it or give them some better guidance because it's too much. It's not freedom, because kids would never learn about a lot of things if they were not forced to do it. It's easier to play than to study.

While Max Epsthein could joke about this easy freedom for children—"We like freedom in America, but this freedom should start at about age twenty-five"—his wife Zena was disconcerted by the choices left to the children and by the concomitant loss of educational standards.

> The education system is not strong enough for the kids, and discipline is not good at all. We are worried about drug problems here and some diseases and too much freedom. Too much freedom makes them independent to do whatever they want to do, and sometimes they lose their boundaries.

While everyone is aware that anti-Semitism exists in the United States, as a group, New American children in Hartford have not experienced the same type that limited their education in the Soviet Union (Ritterband 1997:337–38). Although the Epstheins's son did encounter one problem, the school intervened in a way that was completely outside of their experience. Says Max:

> One day our son came in crying. He said that a boy in his class had a birthday and invited everybody but did not invite him. When he asked the boy why he didn't invite him, Joe said he couldn't because our son was a Jew. At that time we had a volunteer, and we talked to him about this situation. He went to the school and talked to the principal about this anti-Semitic situation and the school's reaction. He explained in each class they could talk in general about Russians but not personally about Alex or Joe. We were invited to this meeting. It was a very good move and a way to explain the situation. In Russia, you cannot have a resolution like this.

That the children have the opportunity to fulfill their academic and occupational potential unlimited by discrimination is the American dream, and the trend seems to be for most of the children from this group to have selected strategies leading to success. Following the ethnic pattern developed over the course of the century, New American parents are continuing to stress secular education as the key to socioeconomic mobility and occupational satisfaction. In Hartford, however, particularly for young children, a new, specifically ethnic behavior pattern has emerged as parents send their children for religious instruction. Despite the fact that this Jewish education may not be as deep nor as extensive as it could be, almost all young children, are exposed to religious training to some degree, and the amount provided for them is congruent with mainstream American Jewish practice (Kosmin 1988:39).

Economic Production: Encountering the Capitalist System

With the children settled into their new schools, the English progressing, and the household chores reduced to a minimum compared to the difficulties they posed in the Soviet Union, the critical task for adults became finding a job.[3] Says Philip Wiener, former Director, Jewish Family Service:

> We would make an assessment of their English-language skills, their vocational skills, their medical situation (current needs), and any other kind of social or psychological situations that could be detected. That became the basis for planning for that specific family. The thrust of all that was to try to get people into a job as quickly as possible. The notion was that this would help normalize their lives and help them become self-sufficient. That would help them become a part of the community. If you would plunk me down in the middle of Moscow and ask me to become self-sufficient in four and a half months, I would not have any idea of where to begin even with some help. It would certainly take me longer. These are extraordinary people.

From the beginning, New Americans looked for a different type of employment than had their early-twentieth-century predecessors who had not, in general, trained for technical or professional careers. The Soviet Jews, however, were equipped with good skills and high expectations. According to Simon's study of the 1972 to 1980 cohort (1997:63), 60 percent of the men and 34 percent of the women reported that they had found work within six months. 75 percent said that their income was higher than in the U.S.S.R. with only 7 percent reporting that it was the same or lower. Although the goal of the Jewish Family Service was to help people become independent members of the Jewish community without further financial assistance, it eventually became clear that a few elderly would continue to need Supplemental Social Income (SSI) and Medicaid.[4]

With several of the nation's largest aviation and military contractors, and the smaller companies supplying them, located in greater Hartford, engineers and skilled factory workers were attracted by the promise of a strong defense industry, which they believed would welcome their high level of expertise and years of productive experience. According to community activist, Robert Fishman:

> We knew that the early group were primarily engineers.[5] HIAS had designated the Hartford/Springfield corridor as a very good place to send talented engineers. When we went to national meetings, we would hear these horror stories from large cities. They said, "We don't have the Russian intelligentsia. We've got taxi drivers, and some of them are thugs." We were fortunate. We had a number of intellectuals that came and a number of engineers and very few workers (not to say that all blue-collar workers from Russia were thugs). In one city the very first family that came, the daughter got arrested for prostitution, and the community had never faced one of their own in that situation. The Jewish community wanted to defend her, wanted more people to come, and then were confronted by people who said, "What are we bringing here?" It was hard for some of these communities to recognize that you may get one or two rotten apples in a barrel but that doesn't mean that everybody was like that. This kind of stuff came up at national meetings, but not in Hartford.

As people found jobs, they often wrote to family and friends instituting a chain migration that included many more engineers and technicians. Hartford, however, was not the technical-military-industrial Mecca many Soviet engineers had thought that it would be. Following a pattern that had begun to develop after World War II, industry was moving out of the city, in some cases to the suburbs, in others out of the region, and the economy was becoming service oriented. The defense industry, which centered around United Technologies and its various subsidiaries and suppliers, was also contracting as federal defense spending shrank at the end of the Vietnam era.[6] Additionally, UTC required American citizenship for its technical workers although a few machinists were hired by its Pratt & Whitney division for low-level production jobs. Engineers also suffered from the general fluctuations in the economy that forced people to accept any technical job if they wished to remain in the field. Seigel (1988) describes how limited employment opportunities affected New American engineers in Connecticut.

> Twenty percent of the husbands and 18.1 percent of the wives were now [1984–1985] working as draftspeople, a cut below the job status as engineer, which they claimed to enjoy in the U.S.S.R. Some of these people felt that there was measure of job discrimination because their perception of the level of activity in the U.S.S.R. was higher and this was not recognized here. Some others felt that their professional tasks were at a higher level in the Soviet Union. This may suggest that the perceived occupational definition of engineer is somewhat different here than in the U.S.S.R., and that perhaps the training and the job demands in engineering are higher in the United States, which prevents some of the immigrants from entering this occupation. Another trend that presents itself is a changed pattern of female employment and, with it, perhaps, lower income levels than men. Among this group more women worked as engineers or technicians in the U.S.S.R; considerably fewer in the United States. In fact, some expressed disappointment for being "downgraded" to either a technician or draftsperson. Furthermore, there is a marked increase in the number of women who are employed in offices as clerical personnel. . . . Another consideration is that, as a society, we may discriminate against women engineers. This does not appear to be a profession that attracts women or encourages them to enter. (1988:70–72)

Unlike in the Soviet Union, where ethnicity and anti-Semitism affected career selection, training, placement, and promotion, ethnicity had little to do with actual economic production in Hartford. It did, however, play a critical role in the support services supplied by the Jewish Family Service that helped the newcomers prepare resumes, search for jobs, and arrange for interviews. In some cases, Marvin Kay assisted with job development.

> What I did was to call various people who were given as possible resources for employment. Probably the best one was a gentleman at Combustion Engineering in Bloomfield, who was in charge of draftsmen. They had a huge drafting department. It was probably before computers, so a lot of the drafting was done by hand. This guy was very supportive even though our folks' English skills were not the greatest. Seven or eight people who had technical skills worked there.

Marvin Kay also worked with the Computer Processing Institute (CPI), a privately owned Jewish firm that offered several scholarships to retrain some Soviet Jews as computer programmers, primarily for work in the insurance industry. In any case, the fact that the JFS—a multiservice, family social agency with resettlement as one of its programs—was never primarily an employment agency was not always clear to the New Americans, who expected the same sort of job-placement services they had been accustomed to in the Soviet Union.

For everyone, at all levels, the entire job-search process was very stressful (cf. Siegel 1988:107). If the New Americans came at a time when the economy was in a downturn, the tension became almost unbearable. Still, they had no choice but to force themselves to adapt by taking lower-paying or lower-level jobs in their fields, or by taking any job that paid the rent while they looked for something better. This often resulted in a serious cost to the self-esteem and personal identity they had struggled to build (cf. Gold 1997:268). For women engineers in particular, training in computer programming was a natural avenue of entry into insurance and financial institutions. Says Dina Alexander, "My sister-in-law was an engineer. Her husband was working, and she paid CPI and became a programmer."

Three obstacles to a successful job search appeared almost immediately. The first was not unexpected: for many their English was not at a professional level. Even for those who had studied university-level English and were able to read and write easily, speaking idiomatic American English was often difficult. Although many understood that language might be the critical factor that would eliminate them from consideration for a particular job, they knew that English was a learned skill, which they could improve.

The second obstacle was the gap between Soviet skills and American expectations, a problem that occurred in a number of professions including dentistry, medicine, and engineering (cf. Simon 1997:78; Chiswick 1997:236). There are, for example, two levels of "dentists" in the Soviet Union: "real" dentists and a second job roughly analogous to that of dental hygienist or dental assistant. Neither, however, had the same training or used the same methods as American dentists. Because of this general type of discrepancy, some American professions have developed standards for practitioners trained abroad and have instituted examinations and requirements for those applying for American licenses. Sophia Bender was one of the few refugees willing to sacrifice immediate income for her dream of practicing medicine in Hartford. Her husband, an engineer, took a five-dollar-an-hour laborer job to support the family while she studied for her examinations. She said about her retraining,

> It was so difficult. It was so different. My language was poor. My understanding was poor because of the language. The equipment, I never saw this equipment. I had to learn so many things that, of course, they treated me as an inferior.

As Sophia Bender has indicated, the actual materials and tools Soviet workers of all types used in their work differed from those in the United States and so created a gap in the ability of a worker to move directly into an American job without retraining to some degree. Says Boris Akselrod of his uncle, the chief construction engineer in a large company in Russia: "I brought him to one of our construction sites, and he was amazed at American tools and work. He said to me that they were about a hundred years behind in the U.S.S.R."

The third problem was that of economic cycles. Just as the economy had alternated between periods of economic expansion and recession during the immigration period at the turn of the nineteenth century, it has continued to do so since the mid-1970s when the first Soviet Jews arrived. As the economy cycled downward, fewer workers were hired, layoffs occurred, and those newly hired were among the first to be let go. They had no choice but to select new economic strategies and alter their goals. Although Genya Fein, who emigrated in 1979, found a position in her field almost immediately, she became a victim of the roller-coaster economy. She has been fortunate, however, with her subsequent job, which she still holds.

> I was hired as a civil engineer in a small company with eighty people. They helped me a lot. I remember I was like a child. They explained to me everything about life, because when I came here everything was different than in Russia. In a year I got laid off. It was very common.

Over the years the cultural gap between the workings of the American and Soviet economic systems has created a number of misunderstandings between the resettlement workers at the Jewish Family Service and the newcomers who felt that they were not being treated with the respect their previous job experience warranted. At one point the JFS called in those who had not yet found jobs to report that the funding rules had been changed for Block Grant and Federation aid, that they would no longer be eligible for six months of stipends, and that they would have to be realistic in a difficult job market. The JFS saw this as a bread-and-butter issue, based on decisions made by outside funding sources, and believed that its role in this situation was to interpret what the community could do financially within the context of diminishing resources. For those whose positive self-identities were invested almost entirely in their careers, this was a difficult blow.[7] Esther Smolor was one of those who believed that the JFS forced people to accept any job much too quickly, interpreting the necessity for self-sufficiency and acceptance of American economic realities as lack of respect for their hard-won vocational accomplishments.

> The first job they offered to my husband was a job of draftsman. My husband was a head of a very big department in Russia. He won prizes in Russia for his achievements, and they gave him a job, five dollars an hour to be a draftsman. He said, "I don't want it. It's the first one. I have to look more." They told him, "Shame on you, you cannot refuse." He told them that he needed time to look around, and after three weeks he found a job, not the best but something a little bit better in his field, engineering. It was $16,000 a year, but at least it wasn't as a draftsman. He has a good position now. It was very hard to reach his level, but he is making much more money than in Russia—no question!

Even though many of the refugees thought that they understood the vagaries of the capitalist economic system and could adjust to the competitive job market, some were distressed and angry at what they perceived as America's rejection of the sacrifices they had made to become accomplished professionals. This was especially problematic for those whose skills were not transferable to the American economy at all (Chiswick 1997:238). Among those who were unable to move directly into the Hartford economy were engineers specializing in oil, steel workers, doctors and dentists, "economists," and intellectuals. For the latter, the actual content of the intellectual endeavor was neither congruent with the American marketplace nor were the intellectuals able to express themselves well enough in English to transmit the results of the intellectual analysis. In addition, intellectual accomplishment in America does not elicit much interest except in a very narrow segment of the population so that intellectuals do not necessarily command respect and status (Markowitz 1993:128). In their study of New Americans in Cincinnati, Paul and Jacobs (1981:97) report that only 31 percent of intellectuals found what they perceived as appropriate employment in their fields.

Although the group as a whole may have had to scale down its expectations and aspirations, by 1982 the median income of the New American families in Siegel's study (1988:77) was $32,200, rising to $38,600 in 1983. U.S. Census figures for those years indicated that the median for comparable American families was $26,856 in 1982, rising to $27,268 the following year. Even though specific Connecticut figures have not been calculated in this way, Siegel estimates that the New Americans' income was 8.9 percent more than the state average in 1982. Clearly these figures indicate that the economic decisions made by the immigrants, predicated upon the high level of skills many brought from the Soviet Union and coupled with the skilled assistance of the Jewish Family Service, resulted in success. Unlike earlier theories of immigration and adaptation, which focused on transplantation as a watershed that paralyzed immigrants for generations and limited socioeconomic mobility to "dissidents" (Handlin 1973:4), Markowitz has observed the remarkable mobility of the New Americans settling in New York:

> Already shaped by a strong preference for cosmopolitanism and progress and having developed esthetic tastes that come with involvement with high culture, these Russian Jewish *wunderkind* did in five to ten years what it took the turn-of-the-century wave of Russian Jews three generations to accomplish: they have become Yuppies, highly educated professionals and discriminating consumers of life's finer things, part of both the practical and cultural sides of American life. (193:133)

Alternatives in Economic Production

Based on the fact that many Soviet Jews had linked a personal positive identity and self-esteem with their economic production, it is understandable that their drive to succeed at a high level carried over to the United States. The ideal which many, if not most, had expected to achieve was to find a position immediately in their fields at the same high level they had reached at home. As a group—but with some exceptions—they wanted to be accorded the immediate prestige that excellent production and seniority had given them in their previous jobs. Nonetheless, the new economic conditions forced many, if not most, to reevaluate their skills and aspirations and to restructure them in terms of the new market economy. For many, being forced to start over in either their previous professions or in new ones was crushing (Markowitz 1993:72).

Eight behavioral strategies have emerged over time in Hartford as the New Americans sought their places within the economy, and each of these case studies illustrates the behavior patterns of those who fit into each category. These alternatives have remained constant, with the 1990s refugee wave making choices among the same alternatives and behaving in similar ways. Additionally, within these patterns people often selected one of the two alternatives. Some accepted the status quo once they were working and remained in that position as they had done in the Soviet Union. Others, however, were more active, learning new professional skills, improving their English, or generally becoming more savvy within the American job market as they prepared to move to a position—either in the original field or in a new one—they perceived as more appropriate.

The first pattern and the one closest to the ideal was finding a job in the field as soon as possible even though the job itself might not be quite at the equivalent level. Engineer Shmuel Fein was able to accomplish this.

> I was lucky. After two months I found a job in my field. I worked for very small tool company. I was the only designer, the only engineer with twenty more people, but I didn't like so small a company. My first job, I will remember all my life because when I started to work, I did not know English, and they helped me a lot. I did not have a driver's license, and they picked me up at the bus stop. They were very nice people. Ten months later I looked in the newspaper, and I sent my resume to General Electric Company, and a couple weeks later I was accepted. I am still working for them.

Following the pattern he was accustomed to in Odessa, Shmuel settled into that job and has not looked for a new one since. The other group quickly finding jobs comparable to their work at home were factory or production workers. With hands-on technical skills and little need for English, David Vilensky was fortunate that his elderly uncle was able to assist him in finding a job making false teeth in a dental laboratory, a position comparable to the one he had held in Chemelnitsky. David's friend Dima Dubinsky, Masha's husband, had a similar initial experience. Although he spoke no English, this did not inhibit his job search or his ability to work in a factory job similar to the one he had left in Kiev. Masha, however, needed to speak English before she could find employment at even the lowest level of engineering.

For professionals like Masha, a second behavioral strategy was more common. This entailed taking entry-level positions within their professions and hoping that their high quality of work would be recognized with a promotion. While some professionals were able to move up slowly, others—particularly women who had persisted and found jobs as engineers—never reached their former levels of achievement. Masha Dubinskaya was fortunate.

> My first job was as an engineer. I started three months after we came. I worked eight months, and I got laid off. Then I started working for Combustion. I started as a draftsman and grew a little bit from draftsman low position to draftsman high position to designer. Then I changed to another company. Now I am a mechanical engineer at my level.

Although Masha was willing to select this pattern, the concept of taking an entry-level job and then rising through a combination of lateral and vertical moves was alien to many from the Soviet Union. As former Director of the Jewish Family Service, Philip Wiener had to deal with this problem and the tensions it created.

> The notion of job hopping, which is an American notion, is not at all consistent with Russian culture. That was one of the major stumbling blocks for us in working with Russians in the very beginning. They did not understand that if they took a job which was not exactly the job they wanted, they could move up to the job they wanted some time in the future.

The third behavior pattern was that of taking any job—preferably in an allied field—to pay the expenses while retraining in their original professions. In the case of doctors, this entailed a minimum of two to three years. From the beginning Irina Greenberg and her husband Yefim knew that they would have no choice but to retrain if they wanted to continue as doctors. Both took menial jobs and began to study for the examinations that would eventually lead to licensing. Irina recalls the difficult first months as she tried to find work related to medicine: "When I first came, I was looking through newspaper advertisements, and I was calling and going and asking, and finally I got a position as a lab technician in a hospital." Just as she had fought for her medical education in the Soviet Union, she was determined to do whatever was necessary to become a doctor here.

> I had to pass very difficult exams. I had to do four years of residency. I got credit for my previous experience and degrees so instead of four years, I could have accomplished it in two years, but I took four years anyway because I did some research and two residencies at University of Connecticut. A few times I felt discrimination. I don't know if it was because of being a woman, being a Jew, being an immigrant, being an immigrant from the U.S.S.R., or all of the above; or maybe people feared that they didn't know what kind of education I had there or what to expect from me. I don't know if it was because it was personal about me or my group, but I was rejected a few times from residency programs. On the other hand, I was accepted at Yale, which is a very prestigious program. I didn't go there. A few individuals I knew were honestly, openly scared to hire somebody from the U.S.S.R. Of course, there were the problems with English, which I had in the beginning. I cannot say that was discrimination. People were just cautious about whether I would be able to perform or not.

Other doctors who came to Hartford have decided not to retrain for a number of reasons. Several felt that they were too old to begin again, some were unwilling to go through a residency program, others could not pass the basic English examination, and still others were afraid to take the board examinations or failed one of the parts. Irina's husband eventually decided against continuing the rigorous process of recertification in medicine, choosing to learn computer programming, which he knew would make him employable much more quickly.

Retraining for other professions was not as difficult as becoming recertified as a doctor. The Greenbergs' sister-in-law, Alla Vilensky, who had been a lower-level dentist, earned a certificate in dental hygiene, which has led to a good position as a dental assistant.

The fourth behavior pattern was to go to school for as long as was necessary to qualify for an appropriate position. Zena Epsthein, who had studied several aspects of business and retailing in the U.S.S.R., knew that she had no choice but to learn enough business English to function in a large insurance company. As part of her first job, she was further trained in-house. Later she chose to enhance her professional skills in computer programming.

> After seven months I finished at Holcolmb Street school the English adult education program in Hartford. I had my first interview in this country, and I was hired. I started to work in the actuarial department in an insurance company. After three and a half years I went to CPI and finished that school. Then I got this job with Phoenix Mutual Insurance Company. This is a much lower level than in Kishinev. I am not complaining, but I am not a career woman any more.

Clearly this educational strategy was possible only for those with working family members to support them, even if the course, such as Zena's English program, was free. For single mother, Dina Alexander, this strategy was out of the question. "I couldn't pay anybody for educating me. I needed to be paid," she said.

The fifth path was choosing a completely different field, often at a lower prestige level. Zoya Kramer, who had been an academic, looked to the Hartford insurance companies for her new career outside the university. She quickly became aware that pure research was not an option in Hartford and that she would have to analyze her strengths in terms of the constraints of language, the state of the Connecticut job market, and her specific job skills in order to determine how she could employ her previous training in the new economic structure.

> I applied to Aetna, and I applied to Connecticut General, where somebody in the Jewish community knew a high-level manager. I was interviewed three or four times. They were treating me very nicely, but they were not in any rush. They claimed they wanted to find the proper place for me. It was good place to be, but I was getting very anxious. In the meantime, I had one interview at Aetna, and I got an offer the next day, so I took it. It was a programming job, something that I was familiar with, but it certainly was a lot lower than I had in Russia.

The sixth behavior pattern stemmed from economic necessity for those who had not planned to work in Hartford. For those arriving under age sixty-five, there was frequently no choice but to return to work even if they had been retired in the Soviet Union. The job search for this particular age group was often very difficult (Chiswick 1997:255). Esther Smolor found herself in this position.

> As a matter fact, when I came, I believed I would not work any more. I said the only advantage I had from Russia was that women worked up to age fifty-five. Forget it! But then one Russian guy from the first immigration, Mr. Gene Ssinesgursky helped me. He was a chief of a department at Combustion, and maybe not less than twenty Jewish people he helped. He was a Russian aristocrat. He was not Jewish, but he helped Jewish people.

Although the seventh pattern was to start a private business, an important difference between this group and those who came at the turn of the twentieth century is that only a handful have opened their own businesses in Hartford. Mark Sidur explains this phenomenon:

> Most Russians do not do business because they don't understand what it means to be a businessman. In Russia, the word *businessman* was used as a schemer, riffraff, somebody who cheats you out of your money. If I say about somebody that he is a businessman, I could get a slap in the face.

Not only is this lack of enthusiasm for business an outgrowth of the Communist economic philosophy that systematically eradicated trade as an accepted means of economic support after the Revolution, but it also incorporates the anti-Semitic assumption that Jews in particular have been "money grubbers," greedy enough to persist along this path throughout the twentieth century (Markowitz 1993:143). Nevertheless, a small number of people from this cohort have become businessmen and women: one man has become a shoe repairman, a second owns a dry cleaning shop, a third fixes small electrical appliances, and one woman owns a small tailoring business.[8] Leonid Silber was one of those who began his own small business.

> In Russia I was an electrical engineer. Here I did a lot of things. I cleaned floors. I did lots of dirty work. Finally in 1982 I got work as an electrician. In the beginning, they gave me six dollars an hour; then they give me $8.62, top dollar because I was a good worker. Then they laid people off, and I worked a little on construction. They called me back, they closed the company, then I worked for Phoenix Mutual, then as project manager at ACMAT Construction for two years, and then I quit. Now I work for an insurance company from seven to two and from three to eleven on my own electrical business. When I have a little money, I will go full time. What for me is important is I need to be free. I don't want to be working under somebody. I want to be free.

A major exception to the antibusiness stance of many New Americans in Hartford is Boris Akselrod. Always flexible and willing to change jobs to improve his situation, Boris was an athlete in the U.S.S.R., competing as long as it was feasible and then becoming a coach. When coaching did not pay enough, he changed to a factory production job and later changed jobs again when it seemed appropriate to do so. Bringing this ability to assess and adapt for economic advantage to Hartford, he is the only refugee to become a large-scale entrepreneur.

> I went to work in a bakery, doing floors, dishes, typical immigrant type stuff. Marvin Kay found that job for me, which was not so hard to find

> [because it was such a bad job.] I worked there for a year and a half, and then I became a baker. Everybody knew me then because I was a good baker so I found a job with some other bakery. A friend of mine brought me into the insurance business. From insurance I went to financial services. I became a stockbroker, and I sold real estate and organized real estate into partnerships, tax shelters. I was very successful with that until I started this construction-related business I'm in with my brother and with another partner, who I was able to buy out in a year or so. We have another factory in Canada that I started with two friends. When I came to this country and started working, I didn't understand what freedom was. It's not only words and a lot of people marching, but it's when you don't have to work for somebody, and you're your own boss. I think I've achieved some kind of freedom, and that's very important. Second, the horizons are unlimited. You can work as hard as you want, and you can go places wherever you want to be.

Overall then, becoming individual entrepreneurs has not been a strategy selected by many New Americans in Hartford. Nevertheless, in New York there has been a different pattern of business development supported by the resettlement agencies (Simon 1997:148–59) and in Los Angeles (Gold 1992:167–97), where large Russian-speaking enclaves have provided ethnic markets for New American products and services. The trend in Hartford, as it was in the U.S.S.R., has been for both men and women to continue as employees in a variety of businesses, industries, and health-care centers. While some of these contexts are similar to those found in the Soviet Union, others are markedly different. The commonality, however, is that the workers are all employees who do not expect to reach the highest levels of management or to own the company.

The final behavior pattern was made up of those who did not go to work, generally not an acceptable strategy for adults in the U.S.S.R. except for members of two groups. The first group included the retired elderly, such as Rosa and Simon Lurie from Kiev, who were eligible for small Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments. Even had they wanted to work, finding employment was virtually impossible given their generally poor health, low level of English skills, and lack of American work experience. Says Marvin Kay:

> There were some who did not make it. They had extraordinary gifted skills, but because of their ages were not great candidates for employment. We had one couple who were both in their fifties—they were both physicians—but it was too late for them to get anything.

The second group was made up of mothers who were not expected to work while their babies were young and who were entitled to a small support stipend from the government. Max and Zena Epsthein's daughter, whose husband worked with his brother Boris Akselrod and could support her on a single income, became the stay-at-home mother of the first American to be born on both sides of the family.

All of the methods employed by the New Americans to find appropriate, satisfying employment entailed a complete reassessment of previous economic strategies. Accustomed to a direct line from training program to employment placement committee to a permanent job in the Soviet Union, the New Americans have had to restructure their approach to both economic production and their own economic identities. Even those who had changed jobs in the U.S.S.R. did not do so frivolously or frequently. Once established in an occupation, they tended to remain, rising as far as their talents, training, and the institutionalized anti-Semitism would allow. Although ethnicity and its concomitant constraint anti-Semitism are not critical variables in the Hartford economy, other limitations inherent in the capitalist system and in the New Americans' status as refugees trained abroad have kept many from achieving at the level they would have chosen. However, additional avenues of self-expression—other than economic production—have given former Soviet Jews the opportunity to recreate their identities. No longer reviled for being Jewish, New Americans have become free to acknowledge their ethnicity as part of their positive self-identity, if they chose to do so, and no longer need to link their personal positive identities as tightly to their work as they have done in the past.

11

Involvement with Community Life

> Making friends was very difficult. When you grew up with people, nobody had to introduce you. When we left Russia and came here, nobody knew us. We had to establish ourselves a second time. Some people are liars; some people are honest, but nobody can tell at first if you are a nice honest person or you are a very bad habits person. Some people understand who you are. It's nice when they understand immediately.
>
> —Genya Fein

Kinship and Personal Contacts

In a society such as the Soviet Union where people frequently remain in the same cities for their entire lives and are afraid to trust new acquaintances, developing new friendships is not easy. Says Masha Dubinskaya:

> American people are very calm, easy come, easy go, because they travel in their jobs. They move from one place to another place very easy. For Russian people settlement is more important. You can lose your job, you can find a worse job, but you stay in one place. It is very hard for us to move from one place to another making friends. We cannot make new friends because real friends are people we grew up with from children.

With friendship often based on long-term connections, Soviet Jews are accustomed to being able to depend on each other not only for companionship but also for general information and advice, employment referrals, sources of goods, and loans. In Hartford, the collective memory of this type of friendship and the expectation of what one can ask of a friend has contributed toward the development of mutual-assistance networks, particularly as the refugees accommodated to the new context. However, these same expectations for friendship were interpreted differently by Americans who saw the newcomers as intrusive and/or demanding (Simon 1997:78). According to Elbert Siegel, whose research focused on the New Americans' mutual aid networks in Hartford and New Haven:

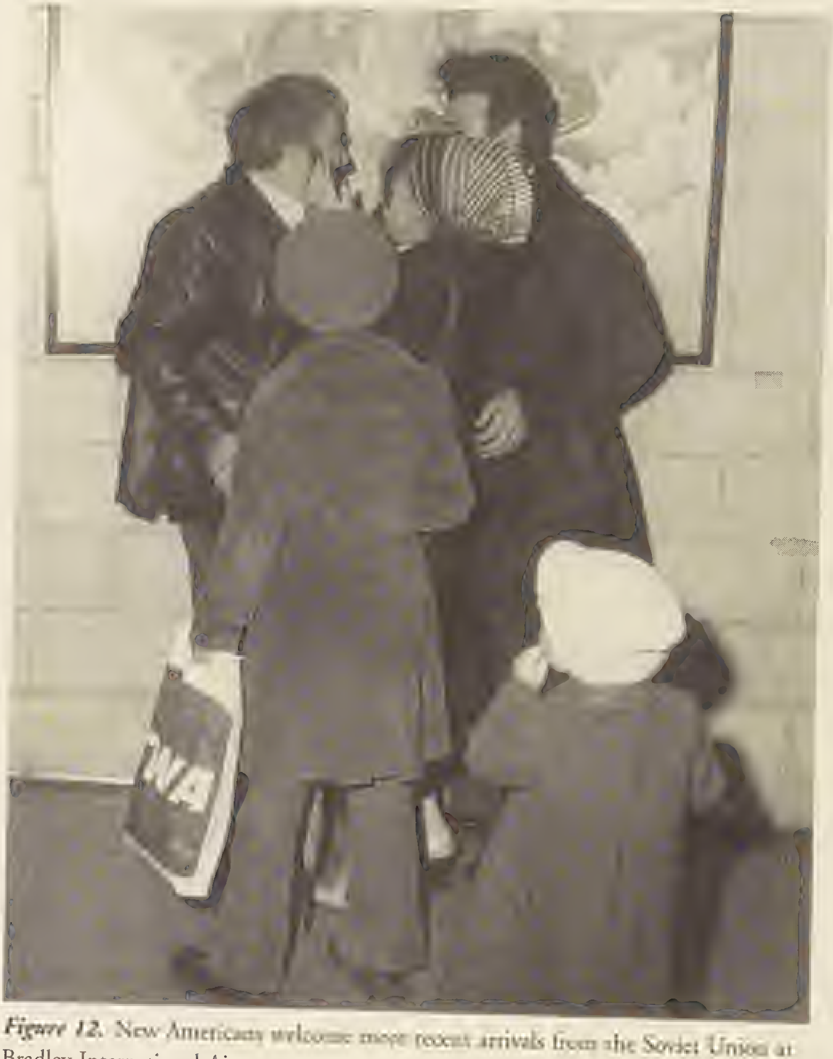


Figure 12. New Americans welcome more recent arrivals from the Soviet Union at Bradley International Airport.

> Helping among friends is not viewed as a political exchange or a way to build up obligations or social equity to be called in at a later point in time. Rather, helping a friend is a matter of fact, a given; one does not refuse, or wait to be asked. What is important is the relationship and what is done in that relationship. (Siegel 1988:130–131)

Although Irina Greenberg was part of an extended family with a large number of relatives who eventually immigrated to Hartford, she had worried about meeting congenial people who could be incorporated into the type of personal network she could rely on.

> The question about friends here was very scary, not knowing if I would be isolated for long. We didn't know what to expect in this respect. But we met a lot of Russians here. In the beginning it was a small group. Now it's grown so we can have many acquaintances. Friendship is difficult at this age, and the lifestyle is different. It is hard to maintain the same quality of friendship we used to have for those reasons. But acquaintances and getting together and having a good time is up to the energy of everybody. If I want to do it every day, then we can do it every day.

Augmenting these growing networks of extended family and friends were constellations of colleagues and neighbors who served as sources of different types of information and assistance. Also participating in these support systems were the professionals at the Jewish Family Service and the community volunteers.

Without an ingrained sense of neighborhood and community spirit, the New Americans were flexible in where they chose to live. Accustomed to living among the dominant nationality as well as among minorities from other Soviet ethnic groups, clustering in Hartford[1] was not an issue. They did not need to gather—although many did for long evenings of conversation, food, and music—because they were able to maintain the connections and consult each other by telephone regardless of where they lived in the Greater Hartford area (Siegel 1988:85). With no place in Hartford far from another, New American families were able to interact regularly, a trend that has continued, indeed, increased as the large immigrant cohort of the 1990s has connected with veteran relatives and friends.

With a few exceptions, the New Americans as a group did not feel a need and/or could not afford—at least initially—to move to the relatively expensive neighborhoods near the synagogues, kosher supermarket, and other established Jewish institutions. Although some had made contacts with American Jews, primarily the volunteers, these connections were not strong enough to override the practical issue of resource allocation. In fact, a number did not realize until after they had purchased houses that some neighborhoods in West Hartford were home to many Jewish families while others had few, if any. Boris Akselrod says:

> We bought a house off South Main Street. That's a non-Jewish neighborhood. We didn't even know a Jewish neighborhood existed because we were some of the first Russians to buy a house, and we found a house that we liked very much and gave them an offer.

Ten years later, when they had the financial resources to do so, the Akselrods gave in to the pressure from their daughter to change schools and moved to an upper-middle-class Jewish neighborhood so that she could attend Hall High where she had many Jewish friends.

For Max and Zena Epsthein, however, the alternatives were between reconciling their need for good schools with their limited income. As almost always occurred when the New Americans debated which house to purchase, cost became the critical factor in choosing the specific one even though they would have preferred a different alternative. Zena says:

> We were looking for an educational system. We knew that the best was in West Hartford, but we couldn't afford a house there, so the second best educational system we could find was in Newington. This particular house was convenient for our son, so we chose this house. There are not Jews in this neighborhood. We didn't think about it, but here is near Temple Sinai. We used to be members for five or six years.

Nevertheless, the Epstheins were not isolated in Newington with two families of friends living nearby in West Hartford and a third living in Newington itself briefly before moving to a more remote suburb. They maintained telephone contact, met frequently for parties, and when their daughter married into a large family of New Americans, they acquired a new network of family connections.

With the New Americans moving from their apartments into houses in the various West Hartford neighborhoods, to the nearby suburbs with good—if not the most prestigious—schools, or to the more distant suburbs, which were generally cheaper and frequently near their workplaces, a central community did not develop even though a few elderly remained in the Farmington Avenue-Prospect area. The trend for working adults was to settle in the areas they determined were most suitable for themselves in terms of resource allocation and then to move if circumstances warranted it.

Several patterns of personal networks have emerged over time as more refugees arrived, and the newcomers began to meet each other or to reconnect as chains of family and friends settled in the area. As the population increased, it became possible for a limited number, particularly the elderly, to maintain an almost exclusively Russian-speaking social life within their refugee circle because they did not work, drive, or need to integrate into the American culture. In addition, some families remained friendly with the volunteers who had helped them through the first difficult days, while others made friends within the Jewish community, and still others found congenial people—Jews and non-Jews—through their work. Yet another small group pursued the opposite course, declining to associate with others from the Soviet Union. Overall, however, it has not been easy for those who lived in the same place for most of their lives before emigration and were accustomed to the deep friendships of a lifetime to learn to make new friends. The main trend has been for most families to develop mixed groups of friends with some families focusing on Russian speakers and others on their American contacts.

Opinions vary on just how friendly the open, gregarious Americans really are, and some New Americans despaired of ever becoming close to superficially friendly people who guard their privacy so closely (cf. Gold 1997:264–65). Nevertheless, Michael Charney's "pioneer" family had had little choice but to make American friends if they wanted to build a support network.

> The volunteers became friends, but my parents knew what a volunteer was and that people were not getting paid to invite us over to their houses. If you meet someone who you never met before and who doesn't speak your language, you don't become personal friends just from that point on. I think the personal relationships took time to develop.

Zena Epsthein and her family's volunteers crossed the line into real friendship.

> They don't even want to remember that they were volunteers. They became our best American friends. They are always in our house. We are always in their house, and we are very lucky, very happy to have them as friends. We have a couple more American friends, but they are not as close as these two families. I don't have words enough to express how grateful we are for them. I would say we have 50–50 friends—Americans, Russians. We keep friends with the Russians, and we became friends with Americans.

Leonid and Sonya Silber have also developed a mix of friends, but only a few have the deep quality that they treasured in Chernigov. According to Sonya:

> Most Americans live a closed lifestyle. For any occasion we have parties. We have birthdays, and in our community we celebrate in restaurants. We like to celebrate. It's a kind of tradition. If I have some party, I'm not doing for Russian-only people. We have all our people. I don't separate friends.

Says Leonid:

> Our close friends are mostly Russian speaking, those who came with us. We have American friends from work who are not Jewish and American

> Jewish friends. We have basically two close American families, that we feel really free. With one couple, we always fight! With most American families, they are afraid of you, and you are afraid them, but with some people you feel comfortable. It's difficult to be free with new friends; there's no question.

Since Simon and Rosa Lurie's family was nearby, they did not need to learn English for an active social life or for economic survival because they were retired. Nevertheless, they made a conscious decision to learn English and to search for new American friends.

> We have a lot of friends, but when we came, it was terrible without language, without any word of English. We got up the first morning and there we were! In our era came several Russian couples our age, and usually they got together, and they spoke in the Russian language. But we had another decision. If we would look for friends among the Russian people, we would not learn English. We didn't know the Russian people because they came from different cities, and we did not know American people. We started to go to the Jewish Center, and we saw a lot of older people get together, dancing—not like in Russia. There is no organization in Russia. We decided to go to American people to make a social life. For example, in the Jewish Center for a meeting the Russian couples usually sat at one table, but we decided we won't sit with them. We would sit with the American people. They tried to talk to us in Yiddish, but I begged them, "Please, please, speak to us in English. If you will try to talk slowly, we will try to understand." Beside that, we carried a dictionary. Every word we were looking in the dictionary, and we were trying to understand.

Although Dina Alexander has kept in close contact with her Russian-speaking family and her old friends from Moscow, most of her friends are American Jews with common interests. Still, she has found herself slipping into American habits, working many hours and having little time for friendships.

> I have some old friends in this country from before, and I keep up with them. Those are friends who would have been my friends regardless. Most of the people here who came from the Soviet Union I had never met before. There are some families that I like, but most people here are not necessarily people that I would have become friends with. I didn't become friends with people just because we came on the same boat! I don't associate with the former Russians too much; that's for sure.

Vadim and Larisa Kirtsov have chosen not to make any connections with institutionalized Jewish assistance to refugees or with the refugees themselves.

Coming originally to another American city, which they disliked intensely, they moved to the Hartford area several months later when Vadim found a job. Eventually they moved again, this time to the heart of Jewish West Hartford. Since none of their family or friends from St. Petersburg have settled in the area, their entire social circle is made up of upper-middle-class American Jews who would have been their peers at home. Larisa says:

> When we moved here, we didn't meet any Russian people. We've not made any attempt to meet Russian-speaking people; we have many American friends. Vadim has a couple of friends from the U.S.S.R. at Yale University but not here in Hartford. [Language and the refugee experience] never pulled us together. I'm not sure it was a conscious decision. We are very fortunate to meet a lot of good friends, wonderful friends. Our American friends meet our social needs. You have friends because you have something in common, not because you share the same language.

Like the Kirtsovs, Raisa Nisinova initially made only American friends. Even so, as more people arrived and the Russian-speaking population increased, she has noticed a change in her friendship patterns over the years.

> Now my friends are mostly Jewish. For the American worker-friends, it does not matter. My personal friends are Jewish. There was a time when I had very few Russian friends, and we had very little to do with Russian people who were mostly Americanizing. Then I went back to having Russian friends and met some very nice people that have just came two or three years ago. I want my kids to speak Russian, and now they have Russian friends so they speak as much as possible.

A particular joy for a very few was the forging of new connections with relatives who had left the Soviet Union many years before and with their American and/or Israeli-born children. Rosa Lurie treasures the new branches of her family.

> I had two uncles in Israel. We knew that because my father told me. We came to America, and I tried to find them. First of all I found my cousin in Massachusetts, and we met a big family—maybe forty relatives—and she gave me an Israel address for my cousins. I have seven cousins. They all were born in Israel, and I wrote to my uncle—at that time he was alive—and he answered me that his son with a wife and a son would come to travel in America, and he promised they would come to me. "I want to visit in Israel," I told him. "This is my dream from Russia." After a month, he sent two tickets. We went for three weeks, and every two or three days we were in another house. The cousins took care of us, including in a kibbutz where one cousin lives.

With their burgeoning networks of friends, both Russian and English speaking, it is not surprising that this group of nonjoiners—with the exception of Rosa and Simon Lurie—has not felt a need to search for American Jewish friendships through the organized Jewish community. If they met individuals who happened to be affiliated with a synagogue or organization, friendships could develop, but Zoya Kramer believes that many of the affiliated Jews whom she has met were not interested in expanding their circles to include New Americans. She says:

> I think in general Americans are a very different people, and they are a lot more open in a way and a lot less open in some other ways. Maybe it's not even openness—it's just they are relaxed and easygoing. Americans are a lot more pleasant to deal with on a superficial level. You always know what you are going to get, what to expect. I was a synagogue member for years until my son had his Bar Mitzvah. I tried a number of synagogues; however, I had very little in common and never developed any friendships. I think probably being a single mother had more to do with it than being an immigrant. I think you just don't exist to them; you're a different breed to them, and they will say hello, but that's about it. I think the Jewish community in particular is even more closed then other parts of society. I could take it for myself, but I couldn't take it for my son. He always had friends, but most were not Jewish, and if they were, it was only by chance and was not through their parents or through Jewish community.
>
> I have met American Jews who are well educated and brilliant; however, they are not part of what you would call the Hartford Jewish community. If they belong to synagogue, it's reformed, and it's more symbolic than religious. So I must say that I haven't met many Jews here in Hartford that participate in Jewish life. I have met one family that I became friendly with. Over the years somehow life was bringing us together one way or another so it was not just because of the volunteer program, but I was just lucky to meet my friend through the program. I have met people, but they are Jewish in the sense that somebody else is Catholic or somebody else is Italian. It's not that category of Jews who consider themselves Jews and participate in fund raising and all the meetings and celebrations and belong to Jewish Community Center and Federation. They are Jewish, but it doesn't mean much. My feelings are very ambiguous about American Jews because, on the one hand, I realize that it's only because of American Jews that maybe I left Russia and we are here, and it's only because of American Jews that Israel exists and is able to stand up for itself. So I appreciate that a lot and am very grateful for that.

Zoya's analysis of the attitude of those who are well established within the Jewish mainstream illuminates the division between the two groups. This gap, which focuses on language, culture, politics, and general world view has been difficult for many in both groups to bridge. The existence of these basic differences raises three serious questions: Is the Hartford Jewish community willing to embrace as equals those who bring a different collective Jewish experience to Hartford? Do the New Americans truly want to meet American Jews within the religious and community structure? How can or should both groups bring about a rapprochement?

Social Structure and Community

Almost completely uninvolved with organized groups in the Soviet Union despite the fact that collectivism is a central value of the Communist Party, the New Americans have remained remarkably apart from group affiliations, forming neither their own organizations[2] nor joining established American or Jewish groups to any extent (Gold 1992:155–56). Even those who hold synagogue memberships generally do so for a limited amount of time while the children are in religious school and/or attend sporadically. Only a small number of elderly have been more faithful, attending religious services and joining senior citizens' groups at the Jewish Community Center. Even those who do belong to groups are content to be passive members of the audience without assuming leadership roles.

Over the years only about half a dozen names have regularly reappeared on those community task forces, boards, and committees that are concerned with issues of specific interest to New Americans,[3] and no leaders who can unite the entire population have emerged. This lack of indigenous leadership probably stems from the fact that the few prominent Jewish refusenik leaders—who were actually more role models than leaders per se—did not immigrate to America but went to Israel (Gold 1992:83). While this lack of participation should not be surprising, given that involvement in both Jewish community and Soviet political life has been curtailed sharply over the course of the twentieth century, American Jewish communal leaders—both professional and volunteer—have not been able to figure out how to reverse this trend and bring New Americans into leadership positions in the United States.[4]

Although the New Americans are not community oriented in the recognized American sense, they are definitely a presence within the Hartford Jewish community. Fran Markowitz (1993) in her study of Brighton Beach analyzed this phenomenon, which she calls "a community in spite of itself."

> The community which they have constructed is by no means based on purposive action, institution building, or the consolidation of political power. Instead, it derives its value and strength from a personalistic orientation resting on shared knowledge, sentiments, and sociability. For Soviet Jewish émigrés, the community is the place—or arena of social relations—

> where individuals seek and receive verification of the personalities, preferences, and prejudices, and the confirmation of the strategies they employ to create a new life in America. (1993:235)

> The postmodern [Soviet Jewish] community is a heteroglossic entity derived from talk. Because it is a symbolically constituted, socially constructed arena of debate, argumentation, challenge, enjoyment, and even agreement, it cannot be a place of unitary sameness. It is an entity formed from confrontations with otherness coupled with a historically based idea that some people are more alike than others. (1993:260)

Despite the fact that the Soviet Jews come to American as individuals and families without any intention of creating community of any sort (Markowitz 1993:285), a fluid web of associations is evolving and is congruent with the newcomers' previous Soviet Jewish model. Even though this tenuous community has grown and strengthened over the years through personal connections, it remains without community organizations or indigenous leaders (cf. Gold 1997:268–69). Indeed, the Hartford community is of the sociosymbolic type described by Markowitz, although it differs markedly from New York and from other Soviet Jewish communities in large American cities in terms of geographical clustering, the development of businesses, and its small size (approximately 360 by 1983, growing only slightly until 1990, and then increasing to almost 2,000 by the end of the twentieth century). Nor does it resemble the densely layered immigrant East Side, which at the turn of the century teemed with religious institutions, social clubs, service organizations, educational and political groups, and Yiddish cultural life.

Presented with the richness of organizations and services provided by the established Hartford Jewish community and the federal refugee assistance programs, New Americans have not needed to coalesce in traditional American ways to provide a wide range of services within the group for its members.[5] Given their own lack of experience with formal communal self-help and religious organizations in the U.S.S.R. and with their previous experience of Communist social organization, it is not surprising that the New Americans have attempted to recreate only the personal family and friendship networks that served as both social supports and buffers against the hostile society.

Because of the lack of continuity between the Soviet Jewish community experience and that of the American Jews, it is evident that adult New Americans will continue to interpret community differently and structure their interpersonal and intergroup relationships accordingly. However, the situation in Hartford is changing. The approximately sixteen hundred refugees who have arrived in Hartford since 1989 certainly have had an impact on the community in various ways. First, almost all of the latest newcomers have been sponsored by relatives, creating extended families even for those who had been largely independent of such networks for many years. For example, as part of the trend toward chain migration, almost immediately after their arrival, Boris and Yelena Akselrod began to encourage their families to immigrate. Says Boris, "We were the pioneers, and we pulled the whole family here." By 1993 more than fifty Akselrod relatives had settled in Hartford. Only two other families (one of which has more than seventy relatives of varying degrees of connection) have been successful in bringing out this much extended family. Second, the sponsoring families have reconnected with the Jewish community—the Jewish Family Service, the day schools, synagogues, and a new group of volunteers—in new ways as they, themselves, become the American resources and mediators for their relatives. Third, as the newest arrivals meet each other, new networks form within the cohort. In some cases these new groups include various sponsors who may have known each other only tangentially in the past yet are now connecting through friendships initiated by their relatives or through programs fostered by the Jewish community for the new refugees. Some of these constellations also include new American volunteers who have become friendly with "their" families.

With so many new people arriving in such a short time, by 1995 some of the more enterprising New Americans had begun to create businesses[6] catering primarily to Russian speakers: a small mom-and-pop grocery that has opened and closed in several different locations, an expensive Russian restaurant with a band in Simsbury, fifteen minutes drive from West Hartford (which changed format several times and then closed), several physicians who have joined established American practices, and two unofficial New American booking agents who organize cultural events. There are still, however, no specifically New American self-help organizations, schools, refugee professionals serving only other New Americans, or synagogues. If the New Americans opt to use any of these services, they must turn to the American or the American Jewish communities, where they exist in abundance and where they will have no choice but to interact with a wider range of people.

Meanwhile, the children—both those who arrived when they were still in school and the new generation born in America—are living in the same neighborhoods, attending both public and religious schools, and playing on the same sports teams with American-born Jewish children and will move into the work force with them. As the young Russian speakers become fluent in English and absorb the American culture around them, just as European immigrant children did in the past, the visible divisive immigrant differences begin to disappear. Nevertheless, as Gold (1997:268) notes, many young people, even though they have spent most of their lives in the United States and speak unaccented English, are more comfortable socializing within the group. In this small sample, however, linkage between the two groups has already begun with at least six New Americans marrying American Jews within the first ten years.

"American Politics Is One of the Best Entertainments"

With little experience or involvement in politics other than in understanding how to manipulate the Communist system for their personal benefit, it is not surprising that Soviet Jews as a group have not become active participants in the American political process (cf. Gold: 1992:27). Their single political goal in America has been their focus on becoming citizens. Says Boris Akselrod, "That was a very feeling moment in my life. Being a citizen of the greatest country in the world, which is America, was very, very thrilling. I had tears in my eyes when finally I got American citizenship." Irina Greenberg has thought a great deal about the American political system.

> I think the differences between political candidates are not basic differences. I think they have more similarities than differences, and the biggest positive similarity is that they both believe in a democratic country. No matter who will be elected, they will both work for the good of the people. That's the basic thing. I am not that much involved in politics. I am not following that closely who is right. I know that when you listen, you don't always agree. Each platform has positive and negative for me, so it's hard to make decisions for whom to vote, but I don't think it matters all that much because it is for a short period of time—four years—and besides they are both working for the good of the people.

Even though they might argue about various political issues with family and friends in the United States, just as they did in the Soviet Union, once they achieved citizenship, most New Americans returned to focusing on family concerns and economic production. American politics has become a spectator sport they enjoy from a distance, casting their votes in presidential elections but not becoming involved in local races. While many of Hartford's New Americans may be interested in the larger controversial political and social issues, they have not found it easy to become part of the democratic process. Dina Alexander, one of the few who was politically active in the U.S.S.R. where she fought for permission to emigrate, analyzes her lack of meaningful involvement in the daily life of American politics.

> Becoming purposefully engaged in political life in this culture is difficult because I am mighty ignorant. I have taken a course in history at the university, and although I did study history in the Soviet Union, to study American history there is a joke. Although I have been reading, I am not in touch with anything in particular.

Most of those who have chosen to register for a political party have opted to become Republicans although some acknowledge that they are—as Democrats[8]—among the exceptions (Markowitz 1993:167, Gold 1992:27). This trend toward voting Republican is in contrast to those who came from tsarist Russia. At that time, working people rarely voted Republican because they did not feel that the Republican Party represented them in any way. Nevertheless, this New American identification with Republican values is consistent with the slight shift in voting practices of some American Jews over the past thirty years (Dawidowicz 1980:150). Although Zoya Kramer never accepted the conservative Republican agenda, when she first arrived, the Democratic Party did not appeal to her, and so she voted for Ronald Reagan.

> You can give a lot of reasons for voting Republican, because there was hardly anything in the Democratic platform that attracted Soviet Jews, starting from international politics, Third World, their attitude to the Soviet Union itself, policies at home, the welfare programs, all the government, the attitude. The Russians don't agree in many respects. I know a Soviet Jewish friend who voted Democratic, but it's not as clear cut as that. I know that the great part of the reason is that the Republicans cut the support for her professionally, so that's understandable. Whenever it touches our pocketbook, it's understandable that you don't like it.

Masha Dubinskaya has carried the Soviet work ethic into American politics and bases her vote on her attitude toward welfare payments for the "undeserving poor."

> We vote for Republicans, and we belong to the Republican Party. The Russian community had discussions about Democrats here and Republicans. Most of the Russians like Republicans, not Democrats. America gives you the opportunity to work and get whatever you want. But, if you don't want to work you don't get. You have to produce something, give something for your society. If people don't want to work, just want to take something from society, most Russian people think this is terrible. I don't want to support alcoholics. I understand people handicapped, but people handicapped, they work. Bright people, healthy people are not supposed to live on welfare. They don't do anything, just bring children. If they cannot support themselves, they think society should take care of them. They're like a plant growing on another plant and sucking the juice. We call these parasites.

Shmuel Fein does not understand the American liberal mentality, particularly as expressed by American Jews who he thinks romanticize socialism. He also believes that American politicians are too "soft" (cf. Simon 1997:78).

> Too many liberals! In the United States too many people cannot understand the difference between capitalism and communism, and a lot of people are thinking that life is [better under socialism]. We hear propaganda that under socialism everybody is equal. Sounds nice, but in real life it is completely different. It's a terrible society. It is much better here. You cannot find an ideal society, and, of course, in the United States there are lots of problems, but these problems are not comparable to the problems of people in socialist societies.

Not everyone agrees with those who say the Democrats have nothing to offer New Americans. Although Nick Shulman knows that he is moving against the trend, he says:

> I am definitely a Democrat, and my mother is too. The Russian newspaper from New York is very Republican oriented, and they support and they encourage people to vote Republican, but we make our own decisions. American politics is one of the best entertainments actually for me. I enjoy it very much. In politics I think peace with the Soviet Union is very important. I think that social justice is very important in America. I don't know if it's my Russian upbringing or what; I want social justice for all.

Two exceptions to this pattern of a lack of political participation stand out although both instances were single events. Although Rosa Lurie was sixty-five when she arrived in the United States, unlike most of the other New Americans, Rosa, who had kept a very low profile in the Soviet Union, immediately plunged into American life, volunteering for several Jewish agencies and becoming active in Jewish organizations. In addition, she made an effort to understand the political system and to participate in the process.

> Senator Weicker organized a group of outstanding senior citizens to go to Washington for a week, and the Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service recommended me, and I, Rosa Lurie, West Hartford, went on this as a Senior Intern. We did not know very well the system in America, and they have a lot of mistakes, but the system is much better than they have in Russia. The Russian government, the politicians are talking a lot about caring for the people, but they do not. Here they do more. That makes a lot of difference in my opinion.

The other exception was Dina Alexander. Despite her disclaimer that she has not integrated into the American political system, she did become part of a Jewish political pressure movement, but only in terms of her previous experience in the Soviet Union where people mobilize for issues that touch them personally. At one point in the 1980s when the Jewish community organized to protest the holding of refuseniks—including her husband—Dina testified at the Connecticut legislature with American Jewish activists and Connecticut political leaders.

> Gorbachev made an announcement that all those who wanted to leave had left. The Jewish Federation went to the Connecticut legislature to pass a resolution, asking Congress to continue fighting for the Soviet Jews. I gave testimony there because of the assumption that everybody was out. We brought a book, thick as a phone book, with names of people—thousands and thousands of people who had been refused exit documents.

Although the demonstrations succeeded in keeping the plight of the Soviet Jews in the public eye, Dina stopped protesting when it became clear that her husband would not be released. Since then she has not carried her activism into any other type of American political activity.

Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s Hartford activists continued to lobby the American government to press the Soviets into releasing the remaining Soviet Jews. The most spectacular of these events was the December 7, 1987, march on the Capitol Mall where an estimated 250,000 people rallied to force Mikhail Gorbachev, who was coming to Washington for a summit with Ronald Reagan, to acknowledge the plight of the Soviet Jews (Schifter 1999:146). With only a month's advance notice, Robert Fishman, by then the Director of the Community Relations Council, put together a Hartford delegation, numbering about two hundred people. Not only did he send two full buses, primarily students, to Washington but he also arranged for blocks of seats on three different flights. While Fishman traveled to Washington with Connecticut Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly and State Attorney General Joseph Lieberman, West Hartford physician, Herbert Hoffman who had never previously attended a rally of any kind, flew into the Baltimore airport with a group led by Cantor Emil Hager, then of Beth El synagogue. He says:

> I heard about the gathering called in Washington to demonstrate in solidarity with Russian Jews and their struggle to emigrate. I remember feeling a strong personal need to go there myself. This was especially important to me because our children were teenagers, and I had tried to heighten their awareness of how my family had suffered in the Holocaust and why it was so important to stay Jewish in America. This was put up or shut up time for me. I knew they would only take note if I *did* something, not just lecture.
>
> My schedule was very busy so I waited until the last minute before calling Bob Fishman. He assured me there were still spots open so I arranged to fly out early Sunday morning for the rally. I didn't realize then how well attended it would be. The throng in Washington was huge. It was so big that those of us from Connecticut on the flight couldn't find the other Connecticut contingents although we saw many other communities repre-

> sented. They came from all over the United States, from as far away as California and Alaska and from Canada too. The day was windy, and I remember how cold it became as the day wore on. We took part in several mass gatherings with speakers from the Jewish world as well as from the Washington political world.
>
> What a good feeling it was to realize that I was a part of this grassroots support for fellow Jews and this ground swell of emotion. I felt that I was taking part in an historic event. We would not keep silent in the way that Jews had made the mistake of doing in World War II. I believe that the U.S.S.R. made note of the huge turnout, the political support for Soviet Jewry, and the refusenik movement. This was a turning point for the Soviet Jews when Gorbachev turned Russia away from Leninist Party Communism, and Jews were allowed to emigrate in large numbers. Hartford took an active part in welcoming and resettling Soviet Jewish families,[7] and we were part of this. Our children also shared this experience of solidarity when, with their encouragement and participation, we "adopted" a Jewish family from Baku who have remained family friends since their arrival ten years ago.

This type of political action on the part of ordinary Soviet Jews—even as they became New Americans—was clearly out of the question for most of the refugees. According to Robert Fishman:

> When they were asked to participate in the demonstrations, they didn't want to. Most of them didn't want to because of fear for the family they left behind. They didn't want to be identified. They admitted that the were not demonstrators there, and they were the lucky ones who got out.

Even with their historic lack of involvement in Soviet politics, Soviet Jews have always been aware of the political world around them, particularly in terms of how governmental decisions affect them as Jews. Based on this, there are two additional reasons they have not become politically active in Hartford. First, individual New Americans do not have a constituency. Without an ethnic enclave to support ethnic politicians, it is difficult for individuals to marshal enough resources, financial and otherwise, to break into mainstream political campaigns. Second, while individuals may differ over the details of Republican and Democratic political stances and maneuvering, the American Jewish community—in all of its variation with the Jews from the Soviet Union as a subset—does not believe that it is a target for serious political repression because of its minority status. Anti-Semitism is not a critical issue here, although Jewish organizations are quick to monitor any threat of an outbreak, and the average American Jew rarely has qualms about being discriminated against because of being Jewish. The strength of the well-organized, politically savvy American Jewish community—in this regard and more particularly as it brought them out of the Soviet Union and helped them to become established in the United States—has not escaped the New Americans. Many see the American Jews as a buffer between them and the state, and therefore, do not see the need for active participation to protect their interests as an American minority.

12

Religion and Identity in the Promised Land

> It is difficult to be [religious] when you are brought up in a society that is so scientific and so anti-religion. To us, religion is something totally different than to an American.
>
> —Michael Charney

Initial Expectations

Throughout the twentieth century, American Jews have become increasingly comfortable within the American context, even if they may not be welcome everywhere (cf. Silberman 1985:22–23), and anti-Semitism—although it definitely exists and occasionally erupts—is not acceptable public behavior. With the relatively few outbreaks focused on and dissected by the media in terms of antisocial, negative behavior, contemporary Hartford Jews have never been subjected to serious, institutionalized anti-Semitism and so have little understanding of the scars it has left on the Soviet Jewish collective memory. Illustrating the enormous difference between being Jewish in the Soviet Union and in the United States is Dina Alexander's first visit to a Hartford synagogue—a direct contrast to her experience in Moscow where she was one of the refuseniks, observed and harassed by the KGB.

> We went up Farmington Avenue toward Beth Israel.[1] A cop was standing in the middle of the road stopping traffic. Jews were going to the synagogue. He's stopping the traffic! THE JEWS HAVE THE RIGHT OF WAY! I was stunned! I thought it was just fabulous. Openly you are proclaiming, you're not hiding, you're not in groups like we had to do on the hill across the street from the synagogue. You're not congregating in secret like dissidents. This is yours, and it's just open! That was just beautiful.[2]

The religious observance and customs perpetuated at Beth Israel and at the other synagogues in Hartford are, in most cases, far different from those of the Soviet Jewish collective memory. As part of their unspoken compact with America in the early years of the century, large numbers of immigrant Jews had been willing to shift many of the visible, differentiating aspects of their religious behavior from the public to the private domain or to drop them altogether in exchange for acceptance into the American mosaic. Separated from the traditional rabbinic and social control of the old country religion, the emerging American Jews had created new avenues of Jewish expression congruent with their perceptions of America's expectations of them.[3] By the late 1960s, this general movement toward homogenization in America as a whole was being reevaluated by various ethnic, religious, and racial groups in terms of group awareness and political solidarity (cf. Silberman 1985:205–11). For Jews this assessment, which led to a reconstruction of some Jewish definitions, coincided with the arrival of the first Soviet refugees. According to Kosmin:

> By the early 1970's, it was increasingly felt that Americanization had gone too far. Combined with the ethnic consciousness movements of the late 1960s and Israel's swift victory in the June 1967 war, the organized Jewish community and its constituency was able to begin to re-judaize the population. There began a trend toward the reintroduction of traditional forms and practices to community life. Jewish education and efforts to enhance Jewish identity headed the priority system . . . The irony was that by 1979 the standard of Jewish commitment and identity expected of [Soviet] Jewish refugees had risen over that expected in earlier years or of the norms of the unaffiliated half of American Jewry. (1990:4)

This conflict between the host American Jews and the Soviet refugees in their degree of religiosity—if any—and in what each expected from the other stemmed not only from the collective Jewish memories of each group but also from their basic definition of the word *Jew.* While Americans defined *Jews* as members of an Americanized religion based on specific beliefs and behaviors, frequently expressed though community and largely freed from the hostile forces of institutionalized anti-Semitism, Kosmin (1990:vii) found that Soviet Jews continued to label themselves in terms of their Soviet experience, with only 28 percent[4] accepting the American definition. Sixty-five percent saw being Jewish as membership in a cultural group, and 61 percent believed it was a nationality. The Epstheins discussed these definitions with their son who grew up in Connecticut. Says Zena:

> We disagree because in our land being Jewish is nationality, but my son's understanding of this is as a religion. By blood this is our nationality. My mother and my father were Jewish. My grandparents from both sides were Jewish and grand-grandparents, so we are pure Jewish blood. Our son now understands that Jewish is a religion. A Jew can be converted, which we don't understand. We find it in Webster dictionary that Jews are a people, and our son agreed with us that we are a people like Indians, like ethnic Russians, like Italians. I spoke with a few of my very close American friends,

> and they said, "He is right! That's how we understand it. It's by religion!" And I said, "Well, I am not religious!" It's a paradox! In Russia, we were Jewish,[5] and we were afraid to be Jewish there. When we came here, if you wanted to be Jewish, everybody said you were Russian. I am very proud to be here and say I am Jewish!

As the American Jews met specific individual refugees, they frequently found that their idealistic perception of Soviet Jews as religious prisoners waiting to be rescued—as symbolized by Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky—was wrong. For most Soviet Jews simply *being* Jewish was enough, and many could not understand what American Jews wanted from them as Jews. Without the experience of community supported by religious education and practice, they were not equipped to move directly into American Jewish communal life as full participants, a fact interpreted by many American Jews as a lack of true Jewish experience. With the Soviet Jewish collective memory seen as somehow less than authentic, Americans believed that the newcomers needed to be educated to become "real" Jews. Rabbi Yehiel E. Poupko articulated this view.[6]

> The redemption and rescue of Soviet Jewry is not just the liberation of a people or a community. It is rather the first step in the process of family reunification. The Jewish people are a family. The family has been severed and ruptured. The Jewish family is now becoming reunited. Thus becoming whole again. A family becomes whole again by sharing of values, beliefs, attitudes and experiences. (Poupko 1991:4–5)

How to achieve this reunification of the Soviet and American branches of the Jewish family was problematic. The difference between the two groups was not so much that the Soviet Jews did not want to learn about Judaism and Israel—they did—but that their entire approach to Jewish life was different. From the beginning, the practice of religion has been a serious issue for people who want to conform but have often found it difficult to reverse a lifetime of non-belief and to learn unfamiliar rituals while adjusting to American life. Accepting Judaism as a religion and expressing positive feelings about Israel, if not regret about not settling there, has not been easy.

Meanwhile, the established American community felt that it was being open and welcoming, offering free memberships to any synagogue in Greater Hartford and to the Jewish Community Center (which many New Americans saw as a sports complex not a Jewish institution) for the first year, as well as scholarships to the day schools. Because the New Americans had never participated in these types of community organizations, becoming active members was for most almost impossible without personal invitations and guidance. Says Raisa Nisinova:

> We did go to synagogue a few times, and then, unfortunately, we fell into a pattern of feeling free but not doing anything about it because there

> was no big push at that time. When we came, they were more concerned about settling us and letting us feel comfortable in our new life, but there was not that much about Judaism at all. They didn't make us feel that we should go to synagogue, we should practice it. They didn't teach us about holidays. So we ended up just kind of going with the flow, alone and picking. Of course, the most comfortable flow is not to go to synagogue.

As the euphoria related to the "rescue" of Soviet Jewry began to wear off, some Americans were irritated by the newcomers' lack of participation in religious or communal affairs and did not want to continue assisting people who refused to become Jewish on American terms. Others, however, simply accepted their arrival and worked to facilitate their absorption into Hartford life. Diane Goldschlager Prince, who worked with both the volunteers and the New Americans, understood the frustrated expectations on both sides.

> The Hartford Jewish community felt that because the Soviet Jews had decided to leave Russia, they would overwhelmingly accept Jewish life. What the New Americans did accept were Jewish traditions. Older people knew a little bit about their religion from grandparents. Some people bought Jewish stars[7] and *chais* [the two-letter Hebrew symbol for life], and some wore them. They couldn't there. It was against the law to have a prayer book or anything to do with Jewish life, about services, about Judaism. What they didn't understand was attending services. If you look at it from their vantage point, they didn't understand English and being introduced to Jewish services where most of it was in English or Hebrew was difficult. Soviet Jewish parents expected that the children would learn and teach them about Judaism. They were willing to wait. They might have been criticized for that and misunderstood that they didn't care about being Jewish. They cared, but they had to function in a professional society, live from day to day, and worry about their children's education. Their lives were so complicated that they didn't have free time. Not attending synagogue wasn't an indication that they didn't care.

As a staff member of the Resettlement Office of the Jewish Family Service, Dina Alexander also dealt with both groups but from the other side of the fence.

> First, most of the Jews here, the volunteers, really believed that they were getting religious Jews out of religious prisons and that we would come here and just become religious, and we didn't. Not only that, because it was not explained to us and we didn't show enough interest and were not supporting synagogues and not seeing that the kids were getting a Jewish education, we failed on all those important issues. Also, we came with an education, got wonderful jobs, are making very good money, but since we

> didn't understand the spirit of volunteerism and the spirit of supporting others, we are not contributing as much as we could to the community. Since the Americans came with the wrong expectation [that the refugees would become American-style religious Jews immediately], they were mad at the Russians who were not crowding the synagogues.

To complicate matters further for the newcomers was the fact that America offers many forms of Jewish identification and affiliation—something completely outside the Soviet Jewish experience. Should they become Reform Jews, Orthodox, Conservative? What about Chabad or Zionist? What were the differences? What were the ramifications of choosing one over the other? Which one was best? Why? With many New Americans having a great deal of difficulty analyzing the differences and selecting the "correct" strategy, frequently they chose the most familiar: remaining private individuals, waiting, watching, and analyzing. Mark Sidur explains this dilemma.

> Jews from Russia don't understand that there may be three or five or ten different choices. For them there would be only one; the rest would be wrong. That's the result of living under a single powerful ideology. It is very sad. The main difference is there is only one form of being a Jew in Russia. In the United States, there are many ways of being a Jew. You can be a Jewish intellectual and not believe in God or just the opposite. You can be a Jew and do not even watch TV, but for them there is only one way. Here I can be 100 percent, twenty-four-carat Jew, and I've chosen that form. Maybe, I suspect, the reason for me joining the Orthodox Jewish community is the same fact: there is only one truth. This kind of Judaism gives you the one and only truth. You don't have any choices. This is good; this is bad.

Meanwhile, as the New Americans continued with their own resettlement process, the trend was for most to concentrate on the immediate problems of mastering English, selecting appropriate educational institutions for the children, finding jobs for themselves, and making friends. Transforming their understanding about what it meant to be Jewish in America and learning how to practice it as a religion were not priorities. That is not to say that the majority were uninterested in developing their Jewish identities or identifying with American Jewish life. They were, however, having difficulty playing by new rules, which they had not known existed. Nonetheless, according to Markowitz (1993), they had every intention of becoming part of the American Jewish world as they understood it. As she says, the Soviet Jews "came to New York not to prolong their Jewish pain but to live as American Jews, to discard the past of self-consciousness and insecurity for the future of self-esteem and comfort" (1993:153). So, too, did the New Americans of Hartford. How, then, did they reconcile their collective history of separation from religion and not joining groups with the American insistence that

Jewishness is optimally expressed in terms of synagogue worship and community involvement? How could they link into the new Jewish structure?

Reported Jewish Behaviors

Soviet Jews began by elaborating on the items in their cultural inventory with which they were already familiar. Two particular Jewish behaviors stood out immediately. The first was the renewal of Yiddish as a public language (cf. Markowitz 1993:155). Accustomed to suppressing their knowledge of Yiddish and having it denigrated, they were surprised and pleased when they were able to communicate with elderly American Jews who remembered it from their own European—frequently Russian—childhoods. In addition, several local doctors spoke Yiddish and conducted medical examinations in that language. For the Soviet elderly, Yiddish has provided a bond which ties them to other Jews through the collective memory.

The second Jewish behavior is the preparation and enjoyment of Jewish food. With food abundant in Hartford, good cooks have become even better, cooking the matzo balls, borschts, taiglach, and gefilte fish of the common Ashkenazi Jewish experience. Although public Jewish behaviors were regulated in the Soviet Union, cooking never became a target of the authorities, so that Jewish cooks have always retained the recipes of their mothers and grandmothers, limited only by shortages in the marketplace. They have, however, almost completely abandoned the Jewish dietary laws, and few worry about mixing milk and meat or eating forbidden food, Says Rita Kagan, "My granddaughter comes for chicken soup, blintzes, everything, all the Jewish food! We like it, but it is not kosher." Ina Eyot, however, is the exception. "My mother cooked a lot of Jewish food, but I don't like to cook. I like noodle kugel, but I don't cook it." Says her husband Nicolai, "When we want good Jewish food, we go to the Top Nosh Deli."

In addition, New Americans began experimenting with the holidays, doing more for each than they had done in the past and increasing the number of holidays they celebrated. They displayed symbols, sought out formal education for the children and informal for themselves, and developed new behaviors even though it was not always easy. Says Raisa Nisinova:

> My kids were circumcised the way the Jewish religion says on the seventh day [(sic) eighth] after their birth by the rabbi. On Chanukah we give kids presents because we are trying to tell them the difference between Chanukah and Christmas. When my grandmother died, we buried her by all the Jewish traditions, the way it's supposed to be done. My father died, and we buried him the same way by Jewish tradition. My Mom now is alone, and she is thinking that God is the only way to go, and she's going to join a synagogue. My mother tries to keep the holidays. We sent her for two

> months to Israel to recuperate from the deaths in the family, and she was there for Passover. I felt like, "My God, we are totally lost." We had no idea what to do on the day of Passover. I went out and bought matzos and gefilte fish in the jar. I had no idea other than to be with the family on that day.

The following table reports the results of six studies conducted since 1980 to examine Jewish behavior in the United States. These include the North American Jewish Data Bank (Kosmin 1990); the Soviet Resettlement Program of the Council of Jewish Federations (Simon 1997); the Greater Hartford Jewish Federation Population Study of the general Jewish population, not New Americans per se (Abrahamson 1982); and The Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, New American Acculturation Study (Siegel 1993). The latter also incorporates figures from the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS). Although no communitywide study of this type was conducted with the New Americans who arrived in Hartford between 1975 and 1983, Kosmin and Simon's figures, which report the behavior patterns of this cohort probably reflect the Hartford experience to some degree. Even though not all studies examined all the variables, the results are enlightening in terms of an overview. The 1993 figures from Hartford are included for comparison, although they are probably skewed because individuals were still experimenting with new ways and had not yet settled into long-term behavior patterns. Particularly suspect are the Passover seder figure and the number lighting Chanukah candles. The former probably reflects a community seder at Beth Israel to which New Americans were specifically invited without charge for the first year, and the latter probably includes those who received boxes of free candles distributed at a Chanukah program at the Jewish Community Center.

The figures indicate that while the New Americans do not behave in specifically Jewish ways at the same level as the rest of the surveyed American Jewish population, their behaviors are not completely out of line with other Jews. Given the fact that almost all of these behaviors were learned since immigration, it seems that the New Americans are not as deficient or unwilling to learn as many American Jews think they are (Ritterband 1997:329). Perhaps there is, as Kosmin suggests (1990:4), a tendency to hold them to a higher standard of Jewish behavior.

Although many people lit *yarzeit* candles for the dead in the Soviet Union, this was not one of the variables surveyed in any study so it is not clear if this has continued as a behavior in the Hartford where specific *yarzeit* candles are available in many supermarkets. The assumption would be that it has. It is clear from the data that the trend is for the New Americans to continue behaving in ways that were somewhat familiar to them from the U.S.S.R. (fasting on Yom Kippur and eating matzo on Passover), as well as to initiate new behaviors. The lighting of Sabbath and Chanukah candles is definitely new, as is the possibility of buying kosher meat—which is almost always more expensive that nonkosher—using two sets of dishes, and contributing to Jewish charities of any sort. However, the most

Reported Jewish Behaviors: Americans and New Americans

	Jewish Data Bank[1]		CJF[2]	Hartford Federation Studies		
Jewish Behaviors	New Americans (1977–1983)	Large City Jews	New Americans (1972–1980)	Hartford Residents (1982)[3]	New Americans (1933)[4]	NJPS
Yom Kippur						
Fast	84[5]	68	49.7	NA[6]	NA	NA
Passover						
Seder	67	88	[7]	NA	96	86
Chanukah						
Candles	68	80	57.9	NA	93	86
Sabbath						
Candles	27	33	21.8	NA	34	44
Kosher						
Meat	20	21	[8]	16	11	17
Two Sets of Dishes	18	19	11.8	NA	NA	NA
Synagogue						
Members	41	44	[9]	59.9	34	41
Charity						
UJA/Federation	57	52[10]	[11]	42.3	51	45

(1)Kosmin (1990:53) conducted a telephone survey of 361 New American respondents in six American cities. (2)Simon (1997:72) reports on a study done under the auspices of the Soviet Resettlement Programs of the Council of Jewish Federations with 900 New Americans in fourteen cities. (3)This was a telephone survey with 451 interviews in the greater Hartford region in 1982. (4)This 1993 study was designed to assess the acculturation of New Americans arriving in Hartford between October 1989 and December 1991. 91 questionnaires were returned. (5)All figures are percentages. (6)Not available (7)52.6 percent said that they avoided bread during Passover. (8)34.4 percent reported that they avoided pork products. (9)75 percent said that they attended synagogue occasionally and 7 percent said they attended regularly. Of these, 90 percent said that they were affiliated with synagogues but did not indicate if they paid dues. Nevertheless, this seems much too high a figure to reflect actual behavior. (10)82 percent of New Americans and 61 percent of American Jews said that they contributed to other Jewish charities as well. (11)87 percent encouraged or actively encouraged their children to donate to Jewish charities but did not report whether they did so themselves.

significant pattern that emerges is that people have selected behaviors that are sporadic instead of the daily commitment to orthodoxy. Fasting on Yom Kippur and eating matzo are yearly events in contrast to keeping kosher or lighting Sabbath candles, which are too frequent for many to incorporate comfortably.

In addition, 21 percent of Kosmin's New American respondents reported that they have visited Israel compared to 35 percent of other large-city Jews (1990:53). This is a significant number because of the cost of the trip and the propaganda against Israel that everyone was exposed to in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, many New Americans now have personal connections to Israel with family and friends settling there, and many have developed a sense of the historical memory through further self-education. Although this question was not asked on any comprehensive survey, several of the Hartford informants have reported that their first extensive vacations were in Israel.

Despite their reputation for not becoming involved in formal organizations, many New Americans join synagogues at one time or another but may not remain for long periods. In Hartford this may reflect the free first year membership, where many join but do not continue when dues are assessed in successive years. In other cases, New Americans may be following the American pattern of maintaining memberships only while the children are in the religious schools (cf. Zukerman 1979:17). Paying high synagogue dues probably does not seem cost effective for those who attend services sporadically or only on the major holidays. Nicolai Eyot discusses the importance of synagogue membership in terms of Jewish identity.

> Some people pay dues just to get their children to the school, to get Bar Mitzvahed, and then they drop. Maybe there is something that they do not like, but we are satisfied. We don't go there often now, just major holidays, and we have the Memorial Park there. Her mother is buried and now is my mother. It is my firm opinion that if I want to be Jewish and continue, it has to go through synagogues. Synagogue is the major bond. Kids go and kids grow and kids learn about and see their parents go. Even though I am still not that religious, I feel that I am a Jew. It came with me from Russia. The one Jewish link to continue is to support the synagogue. It is very important. I think we are the only family—of all the people we came in with, old-timers mostly—who has belonged to temple for such a long period of time. Some don't join in the first place. The explanation was that they didn't feel that they were religious and they asked, "Why should I go if I don't believe in God." [Some people felt that synagogue membership was very expensive and that they had other uses for their money.] This is true, especially when people just come to this country and they don't have much. As years passed by, I realized that there were two really important things and that's why I didn't drop synagogue membership, although I could have used the money for other things. We don't socialize easily with American Jews, seldom go to other houses, but at least we know people, and that is good.

> We are free, free to express our identity, to practice our religion if we believe in it. It's personal; I always talk about it at work. I'm not scared, I'm not afraid. They know I am a Jew. They don't bother me about anti-Semitism or about the Jewish holidays.

Although Masha and Dima Dubinsky were synagogue members for six years while their daughter was in religious school, neither participated except to drop her off at the door and pick her up after class. This trend toward educating the children even though the parents are not interested for themselves is not uncommon. Masha says, "I didn't go to any services. My husband, same. First of all, it's probably because of English language. Second, I didn't really enjoy it when I went to synagogue."

Although the refugees from the 1970s were a self-selected group with a relatively high level of interest in Jewish identity, the adult generations will most likely never become traditional Jews, participating in public religion. Nevertheless, Mark Sidur is hopeful that New Americans will learn from and take comfort in their Jewish heritage and that they will nourish their children within the Jewish tradition. He is aware, however, that a number will raise their children to assimilate into American life, by-passing any connection with organized Jewish community life and/or religion.

> First, they must be part of American society which they are not yet. Then they'll make a choice inside the society. It takes a generation to belong here. I think America is divided into a number of big or small groups like American Chinese, American blacks, American intellectuals, American liberals, American Communists. As soon as the Soviet Jews become a part of the society, they will have to make a choice. You can't live in complete isolation. You have to be a part of some bigger social, religious, political group. That is the way life is. Then, they will make the choice, and I think the children, because they are brought up the way they are in America and have participated in various sorts of Jewish education, will choose something that will give them a precise, very complete conception of what is good and what is bad. That is the tradition.

Expressions of Jewish Identity

Of the three patterns of Jewish behavior exhibited by those who migrated to the Hartford area during this period, the smallest group was undoubtedly made up of those who would have gone to Israel for religious or Zionist reasons had they not been convinced by family or by economic and political pressures not to do so. The largest group was comprised of those who wanted to create a positive Jewish identification, as well as to build new lives based on personal freedom of opportunity for themselves and for their children. The third group also wanted the opportunity for personal development but in a secular world without any of the Jewish baggage that had limited them in the past. Which group strategies would the newcomers select, and how would these three trends develop in Connecticut?

The Affiliated

Lacking Jewish knowledge, English and Hebrew, and a fundamental belief in God, most newcomers did not find their way to orthodoxy, which demands a commitment well beyond occasional attendance at synagogue services and the celebration of holidays with family dinners. For most of those raised under Communism, learning and then living a complete, traditional Jewish life was old fashioned and outside of their experience. Although this has been a disappointment to many American Jews, it has been a two-way street, with many Orthodox viewing those from the U.S.S.R. as irretrievably secular and atheistic. Despite their not affiliating with any Orthodox group, many newcomers mention the kindness of the Chabad[8] Rabbi in West Hartford, and a small number attend Chabad services regularly. Others attend large Chabad celebrations and are pleased with the warmth of the welcome and the Russian translations. In general, the few who became Orthodox immediately were the elderly like Raisa Nisinova's grandmother, who never forgot her religious childhood.

> My grandmother came here, and she went bananas! Total, strict, kosher, Orthodox synagogue. She waited all of her life for that opportunity, and she knew how to do it, too. She became an extremely, extremely high Orthodox person. She kept all the holidays, and she taught my kids all the holidays and what Judaism is all about. She would take them to synagogue on Purim, and she was trying very hard to get this into us, even though we were fighting her.

Simon and Rosa Lurie gravitated more slowly toward Orthodox religion. Both were both born into religious families before the Revolution, but while they did not practice religion per se in Kiev, they had tried to maintain the "traditions." In West Hartford they live within walking distance of an Orthodox synagogue, which they attend regularly, and they have become part of that community, which includes many immigrants from previous periods. Says Rosa:

> Here in America after several years, we really became religious. First of all, our house is kosher, different dishes, everything. He goes to *minyan* [services] every day. Some days he does not feel that good, and he stays home. Saturday I go too. I light the candles Friday, say *bruchah* [the blessing]. We have *kiddish* [the blessing over wine] and *challah* [the braided bread] and everything like a Jewish home.

Mark Sidur stands out as one of the few younger people to become deeply involved with orthodoxy. Although he originally settled in New York, Mark eventually moved to Hartford where he joined a modern Orthodox synagogue. Because of his work, he knows many of the newcomers and has discussed religious issues with them at length. He is aware of that some of the late 1990s refugees believe that he is, at best, misguided.

> I came in 1981, and from the very beginning I was put by NYANA [the New York organization for the New Americans] in Crown Heights, the headquarters of Chassidic city Jews. I didn't have to change something inside me to fit in. I was ready for it, willing to accept becoming observant and wearing a *keppah*[9] twenty-four hours a day. This year I spent among Chassidic Jews gave me a lot. Now, I can say I am a Jew. I got the spirit. What I really got from them was much more than education. I realize that for the first time in my life I am one of the Jews. We are chosen not because we are to rule the world; we are chosen to be people who would bring righteousness in this world. I can't explain how I became part of Judaism. It is not something that I artificially cut into myself, in my heart and my soul, my mind, and forced on myself. No, it was like a book, and when I came here, it was opened. I didn't have to force myself or change myself in any way to accept it.
>
> It is my opinion that religion is a gift. For most people from the former Soviet Union, this side of human life, this aspect of human life which is very important, this spiritual element is completely closed. As they say in Russian, they are sitting between the chairs. They don't know who they are. They say, "We are not Russians, but we are not Jews." There are many many aspects of being a Jew. Some of them are very positive. Some of them are extremely negative. Traditionally, they experienced only the negative experiences of being Jews. The positive experience, the good side, that aspect of being a Jew that helps you, makes you a better human being, they don't know what it is. That is why they suffered most of their lives because they were Jews in the Soviet Union. It is not easy to be alone, and religion is something that really helps me. I have a feeling now of belonging, being a part of something extremely important in the history of mankind, not just a family history, a history of Hartford, Connecticut. I am part of the greatest of the religions ever because we gave people the moral code. I realize, however, that for most New Americans it is much easier to hook up with the Jewish community they can find in Beth Israel, a reform synagogue with younger people, successful Jewish yuppies. It gives them the satisfaction of doing something as Jews. At the same time it does not take much of their time. They are not forcing restrictions on their lives. In my synagogue the members simply do not consider those people Jews. Of course, they will smile and say "How are you?"

The trend, as Mark has indicated, has been for those New American deciding to affiliate to join the reform synagogues, particularly Beth Israel and, to a lesser extent, Temple Sinai in Newington, which had an outgoing rabbi and a popular influential volunteer at that time. While all of the synagogues offered free memberships for the first year, many selected to join Beth Israel because of its welcoming policy, its accessibility in the neighborhood, its reform position, which is more open to variation, and because of their familiarity with the building as the location of the English program. When Dina Alexander joined Beth Israel, she was cognizant of her shortcomings as a religious Jew. However, she had the advantage of understanding English, which made it easier for her to learn and eventually to participate in the service. Her Jewish life, however, has not become synagogue centered despite her early intentions.

> First of all, I was very much aware of the fact that I was ignorant. I knew very, very little. My son went to religious school at Beth Israel. He loved it. I thought he was going to be a rabbi! I took a course for adults, a little bit of Hebrew, but I didn't pursue it that thoroughly because I had other things to do. Of course, there is all the literature, and I read everything, some of the books of the Talmud, the Bible. I know lots of people who are interested in Jewish history. I go to services but not as much as I would like to because I work very much. I do probably what most people do because it is the easiest. I go for High Holidays. I like to show off the synagogue to my visiting friends, and I had a Bar Mitzvah for my son. Let's put it this way: it's a very poor comparison, but when I got here I never had jeans. In the Soviet Union I would never buy them because you had to buy them on the black market. I was not a consumer. When I came here, there were jeans everywhere, and I said to myself, well, they're here. I don't need to buy them. They are always here! Religion, too, is here! I read the *Jewish Ledger.* I go to Jewish cultural events as much as I can afford to. You pick those things because you know they are to your liking.

While Dina represents the main behavior pattern of affiliated working adults who attend services occasionally, are committed to their children's education and to educating themselves somewhat, and behave in a few specifically Jewish ways, Yaakov and Rita Kagan represent the behavior patterns of the retired elderly who are enjoying their positive affiliation with Jewish life. They first visited Beth Israel, which is across the street from their apartment, with their volunteers and then joined themselves. They filled their apartment with Jewish symbols, including a charity box for the Jewish National Fund, have hung the *mezuzah*[10] they brought from Lvov on their front door frame, and began to celebrate the holidays regularly. Says Rita:

> In the United States we are free to go to synagogue. I see many Jewish people pray. It's nice, this freedom. Big difference! We are members at Beth

> Israel. Before Yaakov became so ill and weak, every Friday we went to synagogue. Before, we went to the Jewish Center. We watch TV every Sunday at one o'clock, the Yiddish program. I have a menorah. I have things from Israel. I have candles, On the holidays we go to Beth Israel. Sometimes [they give money from their very limited income] for the Jewish Family Service. Every year we send money to Israel. They call us. It's our obligation, yes.

Although Dina Alexander and the Kagans have been members of Beth Israel since their arrival in Hartford, they are passive in terms of participating in the organization of the synagogue itself. They do not serve on committees and have no voice in the administration even though there is a mechanism for doing so. Among the few whose attitudes and behavior conformed with American expectations for participation in the synagogue community was Nick Eyot, a member of the reform Temple Sinai.

> In the synagogue I was a trustee—a silent member. It was two years, and I don't remember saying anything because I didn't think I could contribute much, although I learned a lot. As a member I could never imagine running a synagogue, how much money is needed from roofing to the Sunday School. We also believe in contributing to Jewish charities, Hebrew Home and Super Sunday, the campaign for the Federation, Operation Exodus.[11] There are many people coming, and their families help them. Even though we have no one coming, the campaign said $1,000 will help a family to come from the Soviet Union so we gave to help.

Although Nick has become less active at Temple Sinai in recent years, he has maintained his interest in learning about Jewish issues, and he has a huge library at home with many books—in several languages—on Jewish topics. This trend of pursuing Jewish knowledge independently is a wide-spread continuation of a very old behavior pattern, exhibited by both Russian and later by Soviet Jews. Following this pattern of independence combined with passive affiliation, Polina Zilberman and her family are members of Beth Israel, although their main focus is on doing Jewish things—according to their own schedule and in their own way—definitely an extension of the Jewish identity and behavior they brought with them from the U.S.S.R.

> We decided to do Jewish things here because I want to be a Jew! I am a Jew! I felt always Jewish, but I didn't know how to do all kinds of things. I am proud to be a Jew. I was always proud to be a Jew. In Russia I never tried to conceal my Jewishness, never. We go to synagogue, and we celebrate all the holidays now. [At first they went to Shabbat services every Friday night

> but then stopped.] It just didn't work out. We tried very, very hard to go. I think you have to grow up with it. Synagogue membership gives you a sense of belonging. I do think it's important. Jewish education and Jewish camps are very important from the very beginning because the older you are, the harder it is to get used to a lot of things and to learn. Children have to have the spirit—not only the ritual, but the spirit of being proud, strong. We have a Bible we read sometimes, trying to understand. We learn, but mainly I am interested in Israel. We try and we do follow Jewish rules. We fast, actually we did this in Russia, too, and we also knew about *Yizkor.*[12] We go to Emanuel synagogue for celebrations like the memorial for the Jewish poets who perished [during Stalin's purges of Jewish intellectuals], we went to New York for the marathon for Israel, and we went when Sharansky was in New York to meet him. Our very first vacation that we could afford was to Israel.

For people without a personal experience of formal religious affiliation or the American Jewish collective memory and with many other demands on their resources, synagogue membership is a new strategy that has been difficult for many to maintain. The press of time, lack of money for dues and activities, continuing weakness in language, and tenuous social connections with American Jews all contribute to the attrition in synagogue memberships. If a family does not have children in the religious school, the temptation to withdraw and reallocate its resources is very great. Nonetheless, as Polina Zilberman, who has remained a synagogue member even though her daughter is grown, says:

> I am a Jew, but I am not a religious Jew in the sense of a lot of Americans, like if you don't follow those rules everyday you are not a Jew. I disagree with them completely because we have a strong ethnic heritage as much as any other nation. Some people say you are not a Jew if you are not religious in the way they think, but I am a Jew, and I think it's very important for my daughter to marry a Jew.

The Unaffiliated with "Jewish Hearts"

Less successful in their integration into the established Jewish community and synagogue life were Zena and Max Epsthein who have not continued their connections with organized Jewry since their son's Bar Mitzvah. Nevertheless, they are unmistakably Jewish—by their own definition, which differentiates clearly between religion and nationality—and they have chosen a few symbolic Jewish items that connect them to Jewish life. This behavior pattern is widespread, and the group, according to Kosmin (1990), is considerably larger than that of the affiliated. Says Zena:

> We are not members of a synagogue, not because we don't want to follow Jewish tradition, but I don't believe in God. That's how I was raised, as an atheist. I came to this country when I was forty years old, and I just cannot change. I want it, but I can't. We tried and we tried and we tried very hard. We did a Bar Mitzvah and a *bris* [ritual circumcision] for our son. Unfortunately it did not work for my family. For five or six years we were members of Temple Sinai, but we couldn't keep up. Here, in our small family we have a seder. We didn't know how to do it, but we did it! It's very important those things; that's how we will keep our traditions; that's how we try! We don't go anywhere, but we try at home. I think that we belong to the Jewish community, to Jewish friends. It's not easy to make our life from scratch the second time. We have to learn English, we have to learn the environment and a new job, and we have to keep our kids going and give them education. Sometimes we are working too much and need time for us, for other pleasures. It's outside of our experience to go to temple. It's such a different world here. How much pressure can you take? Sometimes you just come to the point and that's enough!

Uncommitted to a particular institution but with strong Jewish feelings, Leonid and Sonya Silber separately visit different synagogues for the holidays. Because they do not agree on which one they would choose if they were to select one, they choose none. Still, they sent both children to Solomon Schechter Day School and would like their daughters to be their link to a more organized religious observance. However, daily life intervenes. Like the Epstheins, they have selected a few Jewish behaviors and symbols that form the core of their Jewish lives. Says Sonya:

> I still have problems right now with the service, and I'm not too involved because I don't understand Hebrew, and it doesn't make me feel that I pray. I'm just there. I listen. When Tanya started school and would bring a lot home, we had *Shabbos,* and I was so happy. Now she is not that involved with this, but she has still inside a very strong feeling, and I think they taught her to be proud. We do celebrate holidays. I go to services in Beth Hillel in Bloomfield. It's Conservative. We go to our American friends for Passover seders. They do very good. I stopped *Shabbos* candles when my kids stopped. I don't know a lot. I fast on Yom Kippur. Our heart is Jewish. Here we can be free. You want to pray more, you can make that selection from whatever Jewish alternatives you feel, but in the Soviet Union there were not many choices.

Her husband Leonid says:

> I go twice a year to Chabad house. For me, there is no difference between this and that type of synagogue. I like this rabbi, and I go. I do all

> the electrical work in this Chabad House. I like him because he helped lots of Jewish immigrants. When I came here, I had a very bad memory of another rabbi, and this is one reason for me that I don't join a synagogue. My mother went to shul. She was in day care at Hebrew Home. She lived in Federation Homes[13] and went to all the services and everything. I don't think she kept kosher strictly, but she donated a lot of money, whatever she had.

The Silbers believe that it is very important to be part of a Jewish community even through they have not joined any organization formally. Sonya is absolutely insistent that her daughters marry Jewish men.

> I am telling Tanya, "I want a good Jewish nerd son-in-law." I don't know if I am right, but I grew up with what my mother put in my head, and I put it in my kids' heads. "Believe me," I said, "when you marry, you might not always be happy, but if you marry not-a-Jew, you will have real serious problems. You can't guarantee the quality of marriage because problems exist between all couples, but when you fight, everybody tries to hit everybody with something painful" [and for Jews that can be anti-Semitism].

Although Alla Rozina has not made a formal connection with American Jews or with organized religion, she has an emotional tie through family tradition to both the religion and the culture, which she treasures. Despite not joining a synagogue she feels free to attend services at Beth Israel if she chooses to do so. In addition, her elderly father attends the day-care program at the Hebrew Home, and she is delighted that he is rebuilding some of the Jewish identity he had lost during his difficult life in the Soviet Union. Although her personal commitment to her family and to Judaism does not necessarily follow the American definition of religious practice, it guides her life.

> Here I can go to the store and buy not pork, so I do this. I do not buy kosher meat. I think it will be a time when I will do this because it is accessible. My daughter feels that she is Jewish. When she was a child in first grade, when she heard a bad word about Jewish people—and we heard these a lot in our schools—when somebody said this bad word, not to her but to another Jewish child, she fought with all her strength! She is a sensitive person. She is a culturally inclined person. My son is a technical person and the majority of his brain is machines, computers, and religion is a part of culture. On the holidays we go in Beth Israel. On Fridays when I have a chance, I try to do this because I feel very strong that I should do this. My grandparents put something in my head, and I have this belief, but for so many years I did this in my own way. If I said: God, help me with something, I never did this in the synagogue. In my time, the synagogue was a

> small, dirty, awful place and only a few very old people attended this place. I try to live a life as God says. I try all my life to be an honest person, to do what I should do, to respect my relatives and my parents, but I am not accustomed to go especially to the synagogue to do this. I would like to show my children the way to do this. My parents tried to keep the traditions. I love my family. They were real good people, and they tried in memory of their family and their parents to teach us to do this. Maybe they didn't feel so strongly about synagogue attendance because it was just a different life, but I know my holy duty. I keep track of all my relatives when it is the day of their death, and I should go to the synagogue.

Raisa Nisinova, whose Orthodox grandmother had tried both in the Soviet Union and in Hartford to educate her grandchildren and great-grandchildren and to inculcate in them Jewish values and religion despite her son's opposition, has been torn for years between daily secular life and her desire for something more. What exactly "more" is, she does not know. Raisa, however, feels that she and her family have "Jewish hearts," which qualifies them to be part of the mainstream Jewish population.

> There is Judaism in us so deep inside that when it matters, it comes out; but when it doesn't, it's buried. We have the *mezuzah,* and we don't leave or come in the house without kissing it; we have *shalom* [the Hebrew word for peace], all the Jewish symbols from Israel hanging in the house. When you walk through the door, everybody is wearing something Jewish. And that's where it ends, but there is a tremendous feeling of guilt. I want my kids to know who they are. I want to give them the choice of having religion. If they don't want to practice it, it's up to them, but I don't want them to say, "Mom, you never taught us. You never gave us the choice. We don't even know we are Jewish." Of course, I want them to marry somebody who is Jewish, but how do I instill that in them if my whole attitude doesn't matter? My son spent four years in Camp Shalom so he knows a little bit about Judaism, and it was very good for him. I think that being with Jewish friends helped, but, unfortunately where I live, it's not Jewish. Every time he came home from Camp Shalom with all the Jewish prayers and everything, he felt a lot more at peace. Getting started doing Jewish things is difficult. When I go to visit all my friends that have Bar Mitzvahs, I get to know a little bit of Jewish prayers and so I read with them. That united feeling—when they all stand there and read—I always cry! Every time I leave a synagogue, I say that this time I am going to come back; that's it, I should come back. It's like exercise. You know it's good for you and you need to get back to it, but. . .

The theme of doing more for the children reverberates throughout this group. They have provided a few years of Jewish education or camp, but moving toward belief and sustained action is more than they can do. Nonetheless, they have developed a positive identity, which counteracts, in part, the anti-Semitism of their own childhoods in the Soviet Union. They worry, however, that they are not offering enough positive incentives to hold the children within the group and that, consequently, they will stray, becoming Americans, not American Jews.

Rejecting Ascription

The trend toward a personal integration into mainstream society without Jewish content or behavior that has been underway in the Soviet Union since the Revolution is expressed in Hartford in terms of a complete disconnection from Jewish religion per se. This third trend was much smaller and weaker in the 1975 to 1983 cohort than the more prevalent New American pattern pursued by those who strove for a positive Jewish identification even though it might not be connected to permanent institutional affiliation or to more than a minimal amount of religious practice. Nonetheless, even those who were uninterested in Jewish lifeways or religion were aware of their need to express themselves as free Jews, if only in order to reject the negativity of the Soviet Jewish label and to demand a personal positive identity. Despite the tenuousness of their relationships to Jewish life, the members of this group were imbued with the spirit of the Six Day War and were willing to assert their ethnicity publicly—in a hostile context—in order to receive the visas that were being granted primarily to Jews. In America, most reverted to leading their individual lives—determined to be free to live as they pleased—some with ethnic connections and some without. If they did join a synagogue, it was only for a brief period and did not include much contact with other Jewish organizations or with American Jews. The following cases exemplify the patterns within this secular trend.

Even though a lack of social connection with the American Jewish community was not uncommon, Masha and Dima Dubinsky appeared to be less connected than most. Because friends from the Soviet Union had assisted in their resettlement and helped find Dima a job almost immediately, they had little contact with the organized Jewish community initially. Friendly, warm people with Russian-speaking friends who telephone and visit frequently, their approach to American life is secular ethnic, employing the food and social customs of Jews from the Ukraine. Although they insisted that their daughter attend the local Sunday school, she neither absorbed the information nor the Jewish atmosphere and has since married her non-Jewish boyfriend. The Dubinskys' son, who was a teenager when they immigrated, was too old for the religious education programs at that synagogue. Occasionally the Dubinskys regret their lack of closer ties with American Jews as a group, although they do have one family of good American acquaintances. Since they do not intend to join a synagogue, participate in Jewish communal affairs and celebrations—or even know whether they really want to make an effort—they cannot figure out how to create new bonds with other Jews.

Unlike the Dubinskys, Vadim and Larisa Kirtsov have made no effort in Hartford to forge links with other refugees, Neither have they connected with the organized American Jewish community in any way. Their main link with Jewish life is through their friends, most of whom are American Jews who are themselves active in the community as synagogue members and volunteers with various Jewish groups. Vadim plays basketball with a group that meets at the Jewish day schools, and he gives some money to Jewish charities. He does, however, give more directly to needy friends and family in Russia and in other parts of the United States. Even so, the Kirtsovs see themselves as part of a long tradition of Jewish intellectuals and artists who focus on European music, art, literature, and creative science. Although they consider themselves Jewish though blood and suffering, they are not involved with religion or with ethnic Jewish behavior. Vadim reads widely, including books of Jewish content, which he analyzes from a rational perspective. He says:

> I always struggle with this intellectual question: What is Jewishness? Is it a social, religious or biological phenomenon? If you ask people, my guess is that most of the Russian Jews would say it is a biological phenomenon more than anything else. People in this country believe it is more social phenomenon. So if you think about that as a social phenomenon, then it would be strange to say that you should feel a certain kinship toward each other when there is not a single Jewish type as such. On the other hand, being from Russia, I almost always can tell a Jew from a non-Jew. I always felt some kinship. This enables me to know a person in a completely different fashion than you would know a gentile person. In other words, that kinship, that recognition or the membership is somehow intuitive, more biological than social.

Despite his academic interest in Jewish issues and his intellectual study of the anti-Semitism that circumscribed his life in the Soviet Union and truncated his scientific career, Vadim has no intention of linking into the established Jewish community. In this he is similar to the American intellectuals, described by Milton Gordon (1964:224–32), who opted to free themselves from religion in order to engage in wider intellectual pursuits.

The third case of disconnectedness is brought about by the new social patterns created by mixed marriages, where spouses and in-laws of other nationalities have differing expectations concerning identity, family life, and religious affiliation. Vladimir Scharf, who grew up with a very religious grandmother in the heart of the Ukraine near Kiev, remembers going to synagogue with her when he was a young child. Later, as a college student, his friends were of various nationalities, and eventually he married a woman from Siberia. The Scharfs are atypical in that they have remained close to the other members of Vladimir's large extended family, which maintains a strong Jewish consciousness and sense of Jewish history. Most of the older people in the family speak Yiddish and attend services, and many of the cousins have Jewish educations of various sorts and are synagogue members. In intermarried families, if members of the second generation do not marry Jews, it is obvious that the Jewish relationships will decrease, retaining few vestiges of ethnic Jewish life and even less of religion. How and if these tenuous connections and sense of Jewish identity will be transmitted to the following generations remains to be seen. Meanwhile, the children of mixed marriages have the option in the United States of adopting the American strategy of choice in terms of identity. With the white European ethnic population in America moving toward a new general European-American ethnicity (Alba 1990),[14] former Soviet Jews—and in some cases their non-Jewish spouses—may become, like Vladimir and Sophia Scharf's children, Americans who are not drawn to either ethnic group or religion.

Although the data in the Hartford study are not conclusive, field observations coupled with interviews and a search of the literature leads to an awareness that this trend toward disconnection from Jewish identification may predict the orientation of those who will immigrate in the future. It has become clear to the English teachers, synagogue personnel, resettlement workers, and family sponsors who are members of the first cohort that the late-1990s refugees are much less committed or even interested in Jewish lifeways, history, or religious observance. Despite the fact that the common wisdom of the 1970s and the early 1980s, which held that the committed went to Israel and the economic refugees came to America, there is an enormous difference between those who immigrated to the United States earlier and the most recent group. Mark Sidur comments on the attitude that he has observed in the 1990s group.

> The first people who left—it was early 1970s—they were the real fighters. I can't speak for all those thousands of people who come here now, but the ones I know are not fighters. They come completely Russified. Very many of them look at me as if to say, "Poor man, he is single so that is why he is religious. He doesn't have anything else to do." They see my religion as some kind of escape. Those people who come now are very unhappy because they do not have this inner support that real Judaism gives you.

Perhaps some of the difference between the early unaffiliated group (1975–1983) and those who arrived after 1989 and are less interested in embracing a positive Jewish identity and behaving in Jewish ways can be accounted for in terms of generation. That the older grandparents and upper-middle-aged parents in this latter cohort seem to show more interest than the younger adults may be a result of the former's being closer to a Jewish past conveyed to them by a generation that has either died or is too old to have had much of an impact on already Russified grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Thus, the younger adults have had even less Jewish cultural contact and education than their parents, with virtually no positive reinforcement. Even so, the older adults, who had opted to remain within the Soviet world for at least twenty years after the first visas were issued, were themselves invested in either the Communist system and/or in their own careers and social lives in ways that clearly affected not only their own choices but also influenced their children's attitudes toward the value of Jewish identity. In Hartford these children are now young adults, consumed with economic production and with building comfortable lives for themselves and for their own children, with little time for what they perceive of as the nonproductive frills of Jewish enrichment. Although there are no Hartford statistics, this group appears to be intermarried to a much larger extent than those in the preceding wave.[15] In light of the political and economic chaos that has threatened everyone in the various republics since the demise of the Soviet Union, the pressure to leave has become one of personal survival in an increasingly insecure world. With this major shift in the Soviet context, those now choosing emigration are doing so for new reasons, and both generations of current refugees in Hartford are qualitatively different from the members of the 1975–1983 cohort who were distinguished by their "fighting" spirit and by their demands for ethnic and/or religious—as well as personal—self-determination.

"There Is Judaism in Us So Deep Inside That, When It Matters, It Comes Out; but When It Doesn't, It's Buried"

That the New Americans are Jews is beyond doubt, but they are Jews of the Soviet style, many without a religious ideology to sustain them. Yet, as Kosmin notes, "Our respondents certainly did not come to America with the intention of disappearing into the Christian majority society" (1990:62). But they are not American Jews and most likely—in the first generation—will never become so because of their differing definitions, world views, and collective memories. Although this generation and possibly the next will continue to define Jewishness in terms of blood and suffering, they have already begun to add new Jewish behaviors to their inventory and to invent traditions[16] that link their Soviet collective memory to the new American Jewish ways. While many are still uncomfortable with the concept of an omnipotent, omnipresent deity, a smaller trend is under way toward the addition or the renewal of this belief. In every instance the Hartford New Americans have absorbed new information about Judaism and Jews even if it is limited to the personal knowledge that a competent Jewish community exists and can mobilize on many levels, as it proved when it brought them out of the Soviet Union and resettled them in America. As the New Americans process this secular information as well as the religious material they are receiving—if only tangentially—their perceptions of Judaism alters in some fashion and reinforces the fact that new options in Jewish life are available for those who want to pursue them.

Although Orthodox law disagrees with this interpretation, many American Jews believe that the concept of Jewishness is elastic and that it allows for reconstructing the old definitions, in some cases relegating traditional beliefs and practices to the status of one of the options, and in providing a niche for anyone who wants to be a Jew. Without the circumscription of anti-Semitism, Jews must actively select Jewish identity from among the many affiliations that are available in the United States or may drift off into the general population. For Soviet Jews the first choice they must make is to select between "white European refugee," which would allow them to blend into the American macrocosm without Jewish ascription, or "Jew." If they choose the latter, as many do, their second choice is of which kind of Jew. As they process new information, both religious and secular, many Soviet Jews in Hartford seem content to avoid making further decisions about identity and active affiliation and to continue filtering the world through their Soviet Jewish—now New American—consciousness.

Even if they are not quite sure of the direction they are going in, the New Americans are aware of the changes taking place in themselves, and they realize that they are no longer the same people they were in the U.S.S.R. According to Sonya Silber, she has been transformed over time by the American context from being a Soviet Jew to a veteran New American, if not a "real" American Jew.

> We changed. We are American! We have a different value of life. Three years ago we were sponsors for twenty-one people, six families. They came at different times and for one year somebody new who just came from Russia was living in our house. We had different styles of living, different styles of cooking, and how we are with the kids. We realized that we are different because we have changed and picked up American ways. Everybody who saw me said my style has changed, and I am talking different. When people said it, I remembered what I myself was like before immigration.

As with all immigrants, the New American adults constitute "the desert generation," people with accents who remember the past yet must create new strategies for the new world. The children raised in America, particularly if they attend Jewish schools or participate in other Jewish institutions, cannot help but be affected by the prevailing American Jewish attitudes and assumptions that surround them. Although the choices of the second generation and the group strategies stemming from them will be influenced by their parents' preimmigration experience, over time the new behavior patterns will be predicated on the new context, just as occurred at the turn of the twentieth century for the "Russian Jews" whose children and grandchildren became the "American Jews" of today.

Conclusion

> My American friends are not Jewish in the same way that I was in the Soviet Union. I think that they probably are Jewish in the same way that I am Jewish now. My feeling of Jewishness has changed quite a bit in the sense that I don't remember every day that I am Jewish. It is not painful; it is a very relaxed feeling. I say that I am Jewish and nothing happens to my body. My heart is just beating, as it does every other minute. It's the same as saying I live in Hartford. There's no difference. When I said I was Jewish in Russia, it was always like jumping in cold water.
>
> —Zoya Kramer

At the turn of the twentieth century as Jews emigrated from the villages or from the Jewish neighborhoods of large cities of the Pale to Hartford, they left behind not only the constricting anti-Semitism but also their native knowledge of that world. No longer did they understand the nuances of the society surrounding them, the unspoken rules and roles that governed daily life. All was new, and every aspect required critical examination. Meanwhile, for those who had not emigrated before the final closing of the doors in the late 1920s, the new Soviet world demanded the same sort of analysis and choice, forcing both groups to answer the same questions: Who am I? Where do I fit into this new world? What does it mean to be a Jew now?

Ethnicity—which takes on different meanings in different contexts—has frequently, if not always, played a major role for Jews in the selection of behavioral strategies in Russia and later in the U.S.S.R. as well as in Hartford for both sets of newcomers. Therefore, an insight into the varied responses to these fundamental questions of ethnic identity and their resultant behavioral strategies is crucial to understanding the development of Jewish lifeways in these four contexts. Although it is evident that not all individual choices became accepted group behavior, some of these strategies coalesced over time and became trends that transformed the newcomers and created new sets of behavioral alternatives for their descendants. Just how far American Jews—many of whom are the children and grandchildren of the Russian Jews—and the Soviet Jews have diverged in their conceptions of ethnicity and religion, collective memories, and general world view became apparent when they met in the 1970s.

Although Jewish life in Russia by the end of the nineteenth century had begun to diversify as a result of the Enlightenment, the primary division had been between the religious and the secular, with the former varying only within the boundaries of Torah Judaism. There was little, if any, movement to alter the basic tenets of Judaism or to develop new modes of religious behavior. The secular trend, however, had begun to take on a variety of new forms. While the Bund proposed to become a secular ethnic expression of Russian Yiddish culture and solidarity without myriad religious constraints, Zionism—with or without a religious component—focused on the formation of a complete Jewish society in a homeland characterized by Jewish political control and the absence of anti-Semitism. At the extreme edges of the movement toward secularization were those who chose to disappear into the radical social and political movements of the day or to withdraw into private life away from Jewish community and identification.

Since 1881—the beginning of the period covered in this study—it has been evident that the political situations in the Russian Empire, later in the U.S.S.R., and in the United States created different types of pressures on their respective Jews and generated separate sets of alternatives with varying results. In Russia and in the Soviet Union, major political crises—assassinations and pogroms, wars and revolutions, Stalinization, and the silent identification with Israel—affected people directly, evoking personal responses that evolved into enormous social change. Set into the context of these larger social upheavals, Russian and later Soviet Jews had no choice but to select from among life-altering options and to reevaluate their prospects in light of religious practice and ethnic identity. In many cases, all alternatives required that the Jews—sooner or later—distance themselves from longstanding Russian Jewish behavioral patterns. If at any point individuals selected emigration, they were required to adapt to an entirely new world.

In the United States, only two political policies affected the Jews profoundly: immigration restriction in the 1920s and the liberalization of the quota system approximately forty years later. Isolated from European-style anti-Semitism and never subjected to the ravages of war on their own territory, American Jewry as a whole has pursued a comparatively peaceful course toward Americanization, modernization, socioeconomic mobility, and mutual religious tolerance and diversity. Thus, for American Jews new social trends often began as personal decisions regarding the details of daily life. As the Jews relinquished their Old World ways and began to integrate into American life, they frequently shed those cultural behaviors that had not only characterized their social lives in the Pale but were also observable manifestations of the religion. The pressure—often created by the Jews themselves—to conform to their new American world was fraught with difficulty and personal loss for some. Others, who had tended toward the new secular ways in Russia, were eager to embrace the American emphasis on personal choice as a central value and religion as private or dispensable. In Bennett's terms (1964, 1969), all of the émigrés from both periods assessed their environments and made decisions based on the benefits they perceived as accruing from the new strategies of migration, modernization, and secularization—all of which would take them away from their traditional world.

Who Am I?

Although most Jewish traditionalists and analysts of Jewish life employ the classic ethnicity model of a tightly bounded group with specific attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors as the authentic expression of ethnic identity (cf. Weber 1978), this does not fit the reality of modern Jewish life. Jewish ethnicity has always been dynamic, altering over time and from place to place and has probably always encompassed at least two avenues of Jewish expression: religious practice and secular folkways. It also seems probable that the religious have always believed that anyone deviating from the Law was inauthentic. No doubt, some of the latter agreed with their critics and so divorced themselves from the group. Others, however, created their own Jewish realities with different symbols and invented traditions (Hobsbawm 1983:1–2) without recourse to orthodox approval.

It is evident from this study that in ethnic terms, the question Who is a Jew? is irrelevant if asked by one Jew attempting to categorize another—in this case the American Jews evaluating those from the Soviet Union. More germane is the question individual Jews ask themselves: Who am I? The former implies a value judgment by those who consider themselves as the keepers of the faith and employ a definition based on the assumption that there is but a single authentic Jew, with unacceptable deviation as the only alternative. Although the definition of a "real" Jew within a particular Jewish population has always seemed to be specific and static, this is easily explained by Halbwachs's concept of collective memory in which group members focus on their "resemblances" so tightly that they cannot perceive change as it is occurring (1980:86). Ethnicity, however, is multifaceted and flexible, a fact which has been highlighted by the political and social turmoil of the past century in ways which may not have been as apparent in less turbulent times.

While the image of *shtetl* Jews, the pious individuals of the small villages of the Pale, may serve as the authentic model for many whose families originated in Eastern Europe, over the course of the twentieth century change was continually taking place. As Jews moved to the impersonal cities where behavior was freer, many selected new forms of education for themselves and their children, allowing personal choice to override religious custom. With traditional economic options limited by both political decree and increased competition among workers, Jews looked for new modes of making a living, a strategy that affected not only their daily lives in Russia but also prepared many for industrialization and city life in America or later in the Soviet Union, where economic production would take precedence over religious observance. City dwellers also interacted with new sorts of people, who did not necessarily make negative judgments about those moving toward the secular world, and with members of other nationalities with whom they shared common interests beyond the ethnic. Among the Russian Jews as a group, there was no single reference point that defined the "authentic Jew" in terms that included the diversity in economic and social status, political views, and religious piety.

Stereotyped and circumscribed by anti-Semitism as well as limited by their own collective experience and internal religious constraints, the more flexible selected emigration instead of continuing along what many perceived as non-productive paths. Less conformist than those who listened to the rabbis' injunctions against migrating to "Godless America," they were frequently willing to expand on the constrained definitions of "Jew" and to imagine new lives (Anderson 1991). In Hartford they were able to select from among both the religious inventory and their previous secular lifeways and to combine these gleanings with various cultural elements from the new context. From these assemblages they invented not only new traditions (Hobsbawm 1983) but what they perceived as appropriate personal Jewish identities, according to their own definitions, and inaugurated a trend toward individual choice and institutionalized diversity within Jewish life.

In the U.S.S.R. this reconstruction of Jewish identity took a different direction. For many, socialism had been welcome in that it removed the restrictions of Jewish life and promised to integrate Jews into the Soviet world as equals, an exchange that many believed was to their benefit. Additionally, it was far less dangerous to reject the national groupings of the past and to conform or appear to conform to the new Soviet ideal—that of the secular Soviet Man whose allegiance was to Communism—than to remain committed to Jewish life. The reality, however, was that even those Jews who had willingly given up their Jewish lives and embraced the Soviet system eventually discovered that "national origins" continued to be salient and that they were still circumscribed by anti-Semitism and prohibited from expressing their Jewishness publicly without fear. With the only Jewish religious "authenticity" in the Soviet Union coming from the collective memory of restrictive orthodox practice, many Jews found this incompatible with their modern Soviet lives. Isolated from the West, where a variety of religious expressions were developing, Soviet Jews had no model for alternative cultural or religious belief and behavior.

While both American Jews and the early Soviet Jews retained the historical memory, only some Soviet Jews were able to pass it on through what Halbwachs (1980) terms "the living bond of generations" to their children and grandchildren. Beyond that, there was no mechanism in the Soviet Union for its further transmission, so that the new generations of Soviet Jews do not recognize the Biblical Abraham or David, Sarah or Esther even though they may bear these names. In contrast, although Hartford Jews may not know all the details of Jewish history and traditional religious practice, many see themselves as a part of the general historical context—as part of *Am Israel,* the people of Israel—and have incorporated this in all its diversity into their communal belief structure and cultural inventory.

The American Jewish collective memory stems from immigration and the building of the Jewish community within the American context. The Soviet Jewish collective memory focuses on blood connections, suffering, discrimination, and the Holocaust. It does not include much that is positive in terms of modern Soviet Jewish leaders or role models, information about critical Jewish issues or events aside from the founding of Israel and the Six Day War—both of which the Soviet government tried unsuccessfully to reinterpret in a negative fashion—or about the pride and love that many Jews have for their religion and history. How then can the Hartford New Americans, who have a different collective memory, and are without the historical memory call themselves Jews?

Where Do I Fit into This New World?

With Jewish ethnicity no longer defined exclusively for former Soviet Jews by previous geographical location, history, and the folkways of the Russian Empire, the concepts of choice and the voluntary employment of symbols have become salient. As contemporary individuals and groups continually "improvise their performances," recasting their symbols into new forms and borrowing cultural fragments from the world around them (Clifford 1988:14), Hartford's New Americans are not alone in engaging in the dynamic process of reconstructing themselves in the new context.

The question "Where do I fit into this new world?" implies that not only are the present and future critical to one's identification but that within the concept of identity itself there is an intrinsic awareness of variation that requires individuals to determine their own relationship with the group, its history, and its symbols. While orthodox Judaism recognizes differences in style and interpretation—albeit within tightly circumscribed religious boundaries—this tolerance of variation does not extend to definitive issues of belief, to perceived historical fact, and to prescribed behaviors. For a group that traditionally sits *shiva* (mourning for the dead) for those who marry exogamously, the choice is simple: accept the received wisdom or withdraw.

For many in the modern world who have never lived within the orthodox-historical rubric nor understand its relevance to their own lives, the recapture of the "primordial [identification] . . . dedicated to the strategy of recovering the so-called authentic culture of the ancestors" is impossible (Boelhower 1987:132). Since they perceive being Jewish—with or without its religious component—as an ethnicity and only one of the competing affiliations among which individuals may choose, it no longer serves as complete strategy for life and must offer something of immediate value to them. The issue, then, becomes one of how ethnicity can be used. In this case, Jewish ethnicity may be a lens through which Jews examine the social and political context in which they live; it may offer a world view built on family connections and traditions; and/or it may be an enrichment in an increasingly impersonal, violent world. If ethnicity is not fixed in time and space, is not "authentic" by timeless definition, then it must necessarily alter even as the contextual system in which it is embedded changes. Ethnicity is not locked into one pattern but is a process (Hall 1990:225).

In this context ethnic identity addresses the critical factor of where one stands in relation to others within the historical-social-economic-political framework. Jewish life has always been affected by its relationships with the local majority populations because "the rapport of self-identity is always a rapport of violence with the other" (Derrida 1984:117). Sometimes these relationships are, indeed, physically violent; at other times they can be debilitating in other ways, particularly the psychological (Gitelman 1984:117). In Russia and later in the Soviet Union it is evident that both of these aspects of violence have had a tremendous impact upon Jewish identity and boundaries.

Nevertheless, despite the negative public perception of Jewish ethnicity by some outside the group, many Soviet Jews have retained a positive Jewish identity and have frequently felt morally superior to those who discriminated against them. Even without much of the cultural material that traditionally defines Jewish life, Soviet Jews have imagined a new "Jewishness" in a reconstructed environment. Their aggregate behavior has coalesced into several patterns that employ the old symbols in new ways as "family traditions" and focus on education for substantive economic production and family solidarity as Jewish values, generally without religious expression.

At the turn of the twentieth-first century, the Jewish relationship with the other in Hartford is considerably different, and Jews flow through society at almost every level with apparent ease. While pockets of anti-Semitism exist, they are neither prevalent enough nor vicious enough to constrain Jews from virtually full participation in the local community, where they have been able to create a variety of religious and secular Jewish expressions. Yet, the historical and collective memories in all contexts focus on the collective history of anti-Semitism and continually warn of the need for vigilance, particularly in light of the Holocaust—a personal experience for an entire generation of Soviet Jews—and of the contemporary conflict between the Israelis and the Arab "other." It is clear from the Jewish response to the Six Day War, both in the United States and in the Soviet Union, that Jews have rejected the label of defensive, ineffectual fighters, and in many cases have embraced the new stereotype of the assertive Israeli as a critical aspect of their ethnic identification. Since American Jews have rarely encountered institutionalized anti-Semitism as a defining factor in their personal lives, they do not view themselves as substantially different from comparable Americans and, despite the internal religious and secular divisions within American Jewry, are confident of their place within American society. Accustomed to being one of many groups in a pluralistic society, they are comfortable selecting their degree of attachment to Judaism and to the symbols that they employ.

Many Soviet Jews who have asked themselves Where do I fit into the Soviet world? have decided that they do not, indeed, have a place there. Since 1917 the promise of inclusion for Jews—at every level of conformity—has proven elusive, and many have concluded that the cost of their investment in the Soviet Union has been too great and that the Soviet system has not provided them with the acceptance to which they believe they are entitled. It is clear, however that there are those who have succeeded in separating themselves—in some cases officially—from their ethnic identities and have become completely Russified. Nevertheless, for those who were unwilling or unable to divorce themselves from their collective ethnic identity, this question has reemerged in the new context.

As a group, the former Soviet Jews have settled comfortably into the Hartford suburbs as private individuals. Although they have transferred their economic skills with varying degrees of success and many have found relatively satisfying levels of employment, this is often at a lower level within their original occupations or in new fields entirely. They have learned English, educated their children, formed a network of Russian- and English-speaking friends, and become American citizens content to live quiet lives—apart from organizations—without anti-Semitic constraint. Frequently, however, they ask one additional question.

What Does It Mean to Me to Be a Jew Now?

Since anti-Semitism was one of the main forces in determining Jewish identity—no matter how tenuous—in the U.S.S.R., the question arises of how its absence will affect the further identification of this group in the United States. Will the freedom to identify as Jews release people from the negative historical stereotypes and permit them to develop as positive Jews in a pluralistic society? Or, will its removal as a central force in their lives allow, even encourage, them to disappear into America?

Just as happened in the past, Soviet Jewish newcomers have had to contend with the established Jews as their reference point for the "authentic" (or variety of various "authentics") and the models for Jewish behavior within the Hartford context. It has been difficult for Hartford Jews to comprehend and accept the fact that the New Americans are neither traditional Russian Jews, as symbolized by Sholom Aleichem's Tevye, nor committed religious Zionists like Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky, the heart of the refusenik movement, and that they cannot be molded into either stereotype. While there is still a temptation in both groups to lock into the respective roles of teacher and student or as professional/mediator and client—as exemplified and institutionalized by the volunteers and the Jewish Family Service—individual by individual and family by family, members of both groups are beginning to breach some of the barriers, to understand and accept their similarities and differences, and to create more natural friendships. As many Hartford Jews relinquish their hope that the current generation of adult New Americans would become active partners on the American model in the varied organizations of the established Jewish community, they seem to be becoming more comfortable in allowing the Soviet newcomers to develop their own niche within Hartford Jewish life. Even so, others still seem to be waiting for the New Americans to understand the "authentic"—by the classic definition—and to play by American rules, which are frequently alien to the Soviet Jewish experience.

At the same time that many New Americans continue to define their Jewish identities in Soviet terms, they are also being exposed to a large variety of Jewish behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that are new to them but that they see employed by American Jews without anti-Semitic constraints. The trend has been for the New Americans to build on the secular Jewish behaviors they brought from the U.S.S.R. and on a few familiar holidays, expanding beyond them with the celebration of both additional customs and previously unknown holidays. In addition, many have begun to contribute to Jewish charities, attend secular Jewish cultural events at Jewish sites, and have some connection, generally sporadic, with Jewish agencies.

Furthermore, three main behavior patterns have emerged in relation to synagogue membership. First, a small group has joined synagogues, primarily Reform temples, although they have not become active participants in the organizational aspects of membership. A larger group with self-described "Jewish hearts," which affiliated for only a short period or did not affiliate at all, have expressed a desire to be identified as Jews and occasionally to do Jewish things. A third disparate group has remained apart from any institutional affiliation. It is composed of those who are either completely disconnected from the American Jewish community and religion, or those who are intermarried and content to become Americans without Jewish connections, or intellectuals who are Jewish by birth and maintain a vague vestigial connection yet are not interested in what they perceive as the parochialism of any religion or ethnic identity. Nevertheless, as all three subsets of New Americans add American Jewish strategies to their previous Soviet Jewish inventories—particularly their employment of a variety of new symbols and their participation, no matter how slight or infrequent, in Hartford Jewish group events—they are developing a positive approach to their Jewish identities. That these behaviors are largely sporadic, minimal, and symbolic is part of the pattern and is to be expected (Gans 1979:6).

Thus, the group of Soviet Jews who arrived in Hartford between 1975 and 1983 has already divided, with those claiming "Jewish hearts" consciously communicating their desire for a positive Jewish identity to their children and providing them with Jewish experiences and symbols. The children, who are growing up free of the anti-Semitism that circumscribed their parents, are immersed in the American Jewish milieu from which they will abstract those cultural items that mesh with their own self-identities as they develop into adults whose lives are rooted in the New World.

That their definition of being Jewish may differ from that of American Jews is not a critical issue for them, perhaps because they have begun to see it in terms of the range of behaviors within the Jewish rubric, and they are willing to be flexible and accommodate those American Jewish concepts and strategies that are not completely alien. As a group these New Americans did not immigrate to blend into the general American population but to become Jews in America—if not "American Jews." Since many had struggled for years in the Soviet Union to build positive self-identities and to maintain their self-respect as Jews, they are not interested in denying themselves the satisfaction of living openly as Jews, particularly as they identify with a prosperous, competent segment of the Hartford social structure.

Their Jewish identity is in the process of becoming; it is not fixed in the past nor subsumed by American Jewish patterns which are, in any case, "inauthentic" in terms of their Soviet experience. For New Americans, ethnicity is a dynamic as they select items from the Hartford Jewish inventory and invent their own Jewish traditions, which may be tangential to or interwoven with those of the American Jews. They know that they are establishing themselves as one aspect of Hartford Jewish life and that their Jewish world view is changing. They are confident that this is good for themselves and for their children.

> What is surprising here: the Jewish people look at you. They look in your eye—with open faces—they keep their heads up straight. In Russia, a Jew is not like this. They walk with their heads down and try to hide themselves. That's why I said, here I have no problem. I'm not afraid to say I AM JEWISH!
>
> —Zena Epsthein

NOTES

Introduction

1. By 1994, 1,215,563 Jews had immigrated to Israel from the U.S.S.R/F.S.U. (Gitelman 1997:25).

2. I will examine the issue of Birobidzhan, the ostensible Soviet Jewish Autonomous Region, in a later section.

3. Ashkenazi Jews are the Germanic, Eastern, and Central European Jews and their descendants around the world. *Yiddishkeit* is the constellation of ethnoreligious beliefs and behaviors comprising their culture and its expression in Yiddish.

4. Although several studies (Simon 1985; Kosmin 1990; Siegel 1993) have determined that this group is the most comfortable with the label of "American Jew" or "New American," neither term gives us enough specific information in this context.

5. According to the Resettlement Office of the Greater Hartford Jewish Family Service, specific statistics are: Fiscal year 1988:d.s. 28 refugees, 1989:d.s. 124, 1990:d.s. 311, 1991:d.s. 222, 1992:d.s. 211, 1993:d.s. 223, 1994:d.s. 210, and 1995:d.s 125. Also see Siegel (1988:26–27) for a breakdown of specific statistics for the 1975–1983 Hartford and New Haven cohort.

6. This analysis excludes Israelis living in the United States who are in a different social category (Mittleberg and Waters 1992).

7. This number is probably not reflective of the current situation because of three major population shifts: the Hebrew Home and Hospital moved to West Hartford in 1989, any number of elderly who had been able live independently may have relocated to sheltered living situations or died, and the "gentrified" West End has lost Jews as children reach middle-school age and parents decide to move from the poor city school system to the excellent ones in the suburbs.

8. Anthropologists studying specific aspects of a culture may use a variety of other methods such as measuring food supplies, learning women's traditional methods of healing, or collecting folk tales. In addition, archaeologists, physical, linguistic, biological, and applied anthropologists have specific methods appropriate to their individual subdisciplines.

9. The WPA interviews were conducted in 1937 and 1938 and are available only in typescript. Since these interviews were not recorded nor were the questions included, it is impossible to determine how closely they follow the informants' actual words. Also, it is not clear if the interviews were conducted in

English or in Yiddish and then translated by the interviewer into a more literate English. The interviews by Cohen and Magda were recorded on tape in English and then transcribed.

10. All quotations using pseudonyms but without the name of the interviewer or dates are from my ethnographic research.

11. Kosmin (1990) reports that obtaining basic demographic information about Soviet Jews in various American cities is frequently difficult because local resettlement agencies—frequently social service providers—classify the refugees as "clients" and refuse to breach what they perceive as rules of confidentiality. In addition, unless there is a particular problem, the agencies close individual refugee files at the end of the resettlement period and do not compile aggregate data. This has been the pattern in Hartford as well, so that information on Soviet Jews as a group prior to 1989 is unavailable except in the most general terms.

12. Particularly useful for understanding life in the Russian Empire are: Baron (1976), Dubnow (1946 [1916]), Ettinger (1970), Gitelman (1988), Howe (1976), Johnson (1987), Margolis and Marx (1981 [1927]), Roth (1989 [1954]), and Sachar (1990 [1958]). Focusing on life in the Soviet Union are: Altschuler (1995), Etinger (1995), Gilbert (1985), Gitelman (1988, 1997), Goldberg (1982 [1961]), Kageden (1995), Korey (1973), Levin (1995), Pinkus (1988), Rapoport (1990), Rothchild (1985), Schwartz (1951), Sharansky (1988), Swirsky (1979), Weinberg (1995).

13. The former include: Bershtel and Graubard (1992), Birmingham (1967, 1984), Cohen (1988), Dawidowicz (1977, 1982), Goldscheider (1986), Goldscheider and Zukerman (1984), Hertzberg (1979, 1989, 1992), Marcus (1981), Sachar (1992), Silverman (1970), Sklare (1971). Most useful in the latter category were: Alba (1990), Benkin and DeSantis (1982), Bodnar (1985), Gans (1956, 1979), Glazer and Moynihan (1963, 1975), Gordon (1964, 1978, 1988), Handlin (1973), Herberg (1983), Higham (1955, 1984 [1974]), Novak (1971), Smith (1978), Stout (1975).

14. Ellenbogen (1984), Fienstein (1981), Gilson (1981), Gitelman (1981), Markus and Schwartz (1984), Paul and Jacobs (1981), Sanders (1985), Simon and Simon (1985).

15. Cardin, Chikvashvili, Khait, Kaufman, and Zukerman (1979), Carp (1989), Colman (1990), Friedman (1988), Goldberg (1990), Poupko (1991), Rubin, Abrahamson and Makta (1982), Zahler (1988).

16. Although the existence of Israel is a significant aspect of Jewish identity worldwide, the concomitant shift for many from a religious orientation within an ethnic identity to that of secular citizenship in a Jewish state is beyond the scope of this study, however promising for future research.

17. This can be any physical trait, character disorder, or—most important for understanding the Jews—ethnic identification, which discriminates against or separates an individual or group from the mainstream society (Goffman 1963:3–5).

18. What the immigrants made of themselves in America, however, is a different story, one that is reflected in the socioeconomic and gender distinctions of today and definitely deserving of another study.

19. It is understood that many Jewish traditionalists who believe that Judaism is an essential, unchanging entity centering around immutable core truths and behaviors are disturbed by the exclusive use of only a few symbols by many and continually sound the alarm of assimilation. (See Bershtel and Graubard [1992:17–44] for a discussion of this view.) Still, according to Gans (1979), Jews who relate to Judaism at this symbolic level—including those who practice few if any rituals, know little of Jewish theology or history, and do not participate in the larger Jewish community—consider themselves to be Jewish and feel that they are leading meaningful and authentic (as defined by themselves) Jewish lives.

20. Waters (1990:155–64) discusses the inability of white ethnics who view ethnicity as voluntary to understand those issues confronting African Americans and other nonwhite groups whose members are constrained by involuntary physical characteristics.

21. These range from self-contained ultraorthodox communities to the most radical aspects of modern culture: "feminism, gay liberation, counterculture spirituality, radical politics" whose adherents have formed Jewish groups focusing on and drawing from their particular social contexts (Bershtel and Graubard 1992:286). In addition, the authors have also investigated the world of those who are completely disconnected from Judaism except for their self-selected identification as Jews.

Chapter One. The Old Country

1. This is the first of the oral history interviews collected from the archives of the state of Connecticut, the University of Connecticut, and the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford. I have changed the names of all informants unless otherwise identified, included the name of the interviewer and the date of the interview as citations in the text, and edited interviews for clarity and brevity.

2. Pinkus (1988:23–27) outlines in detail the anti-Jewish policy of Alexander III's administration and categorizes the discriminatory laws in terms of those restricting Jews in state service, the armed forces, and civil rights.

3. cf. Johnson (1987:365) for details of European emigration figures.

4. See Pinkus (1988:39–47) for a detailed analysis of the various Russian-Jewish political organizations that coalesced into four main trends: Zionism, socialism, liberalism, and orthodoxy.

5. Without this type of religious and educational leadership, Jewish community in America would lack a salient feature of religious life in the Old World and would be open to new types of religious expression. The bitter irony is that the descendants of these religious groups who remained in the traditional homes of

their ancestors suffered under Stalin and then were decimated by the onslaught of the Nazis. Except for the those who were evacuated during the war, such as the followers of the Chabad and Braslau rebbis who were able to organize religious life for their members in Tashkent and Samarkand, they were almost completely annihilated (Gitelman 1988:251). Since the war, the remnants of these groups, which are now termed the ultraorthodox, have created new communities primarily in Israel and the United States.

6. This is the first of my interviews of contemporary Soviet Jews now living in Connecticut.

Chapter Two. The Search for a Niche in the Soviet World

1. In 1927 an estimated 50,000 Jews were members of the Communist Party, 4.4 percent of the total membership (Simon 1997:49).

2. Vladimir Peskin and Boris Polyakov (real names) were among the ten Soviet Army veterans who prepared accounts of their military experiences for the Jewish Soldiers of the Red Army Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibit sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford and the Greater Hartford Jewish Community Center. I have edited their materials, which were originally written in Russian and translated by Lucy Dratva and Vladimir Kaplan.

3. Abram Izikson and Lena Krant (real names) in the next section are Soviet Jews living in Greater Hartford. They recorded their experiences as survivors during the war as part of the Jewish Historical Society's oral history project, "Witness to War: 1941–1945: The Soviet Jewish Experience." The original interviews were conducted in Russian by Vladimir Kaplan and translated by Sergei Zaslavsky. I did the follow-up interviews and edited the transcripts.

4. The entrance examinations to Soviet institutes of higher learning are frequently oral. Since many highly qualified Jewish candidates failed these oral exams, it was commonly believed that they were used to discriminate against Jewish students who would otherwise make up too large a percentage of the student population, particularly in prestigious professions.

Chapter Three. Die Goldene Medine: *The Golden Land*

1. Marcus (1969:54–107) details the variety of transient Jews who lived in Connecticut during the Colonial period and several of the permanent families who intermarried and became part of the mainstream Christian community.

2. These same themes recur in the interviews of those who came to Hartford from the Soviet Union between 1974 and 1983.

3. Newspaper sources for the sections on Zionism and the founding of Israel are on file at the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford. The citations

are incomplete because they were cut from newspapers and pasted into a scrapbook by an unknown collector.

4. Chaim Weizmann, then president of the World Zionist Organization, was the chemist who invented TNT, a critical element in the British war effort. He was instrumental in extracting the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which promised the Jews a national home in Palestine, from the British.

5. For an extended discussion of the development of the Hartford religious institutions, see Dalin and Rosenbaum (1997): Beth Israel (34–47), the early orthodox synagogues (63–68), and the development of the Conservative and Reform movements (85–112).

6. One of these, the National Council of Jewish Women, founded as a national organization by German Jews in 1893 and established in Hartford in 1910, has a long history of helping immigrants in America. During the early years the NCJW was well known for its residences for Jewish "working girls," "Americanization" classes, Sunday Schools, and milk stations for poor Jewish children. Later the NCJW branched out into more secular community activities, participating in interfaith programs, the Juvenile Court system, and in more general refugee issues (Silverman 1970:36). Over the years this group has grown to include Jewish women regardless of their countries of origin and in the 1970s and the early 1980s was pivotal in providing services and coordinating many of the volunteers who helped the modern Soviet Jewish immigrants adapt to Hartford.

7. Annie Fisher was born in Kiev in 1883 and brought to Hartford as a child. As part of a experiment to educate women at an all-male university, she attended Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. After her graduation in 1904, she went to work for the Hartford Public Schools, first as a librarian and then as an English teacher for both immigrant adults and children. While working, she continued her own education by studying in a variety of institutions, eventually earning an M.A. from New York University. Always active in both Hartford and Jewish community service, she became the first woman district superintendent of schools under the old school system and later the first woman principal of a public school. She was also the first Jewish woman in Connecticut to be honored by having a school named after her. According to her obituary in the *Hartford Courant* (12–26–1968): "All her life, both personally and professionally as a student, teacher and executive, had been spent at the Barnard School, originally in the city's East Side and a melting pot for myriad immigrants to Hartford. Under Miss Fisher's jurisdiction, thousands of children were not only taught and cared for there, but began their Americanization there. Today they and their children in turn can be grateful that Fortune blessed them this way" (in Silverman 1970:160).

8. Edited by Rabbi Isaac Hurewitz, the only extant edition of this paper is the first issue from 1908. The Jewish Historical Society, which has this copy on file, believes that it was probably published for several years.

9. Cf. Simon (1997:31–37) for an interesting analysis with statistics of the Russian Jewish attitude toward education and socioeconomic mobility.

10. In their chapter "The Rise of Manufacturing" Grant and Grant (1986:47–54) succinctly outline the development of industry in Hartford between 1787 and 1984.

11. HIAS, the acronym for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, has assisted the migration of Jews for more than one hundred years, and most current refugees from the U.S.S.R. come to America under its auspices. Sanders (1988) tells the story of this organization within the twentieth-century historical context.

Chapter Four. The Consolidation of the Hartford Community

1. See Higham's literature review and discussion of anti-Semitism and American culture (1984:153–74).

2. Wyman (1968) and Morse (1968) believe that Roosevelt and his government did even less than originally thought to assist those Jews trapped in Europe.

3. In 1989 the Hebrew Home built a new building in West Hartford adjacent to the Jewish Community Center, and in 1990 Mount Sinai Hospital, succumbing to financial pressures, became a part of St. Francis Hospital.

4. Silverman (1970) and Dalin and Rosenbaum (1997) have outlined the development of the Hartford community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with a focus on the synagogues and organizations, their transformation over time, and the influential individuals who built them.

5. In her chapter "Red Letter Days," Joselit (1994:89–134) examines the Americanization of various Jewish lifecycle events particularly in terms of changing folkways. In "The Call of the Matzoh" (219–236), she analyzes the changes in Jewish holidays and observance in America.

6. For a more complete discussion of the Six Day War and its impact on the Jews, see Sachar (1993:774–78), Silberman (1985:181–85, 197–207), and Sklar (1971:216–22).

7. See Chernin (1999:14–69) and Levanon (199:70–83) for detailed discussions of the campaign for Soviet Jewry.

8. Richard Perle discusses his involvement with this amendment in Perle (1994:1) and in Peele [sic] in Simon (1988:347–55). See also Sachar (1993:911–19) for a detailed analysis of the passage of this bill and its effect on Soviet emigration policy.

9. Cf. Korey (1999:97–114) and Goldman (1999:115–23) for further discussion of Jackson-Vanik.

Chapter Five. Egypt

1. Most of the information in Parts II and III comes from my informants who were most generous with their time and stories.

2. Since my study is based on interviews with those who left the Soviet Union before 1983, I have not included the results of an interesting and informative survey by Robert J. Byrm and his associate Rozalina Ryvkina (1994), who explored the issues of ethnicity, anti-Semitism, and emigration in three large Jewish population centers: Moscow, Minsk, and Kiev in the early 1990s.

3 The 1970 census estimated that there were 2,150,000 Jews in the Soviet Union with 38 percent in Russia, 36 percent in the Ukraine, 7 percent in Byelorussia, and another combined 15 percent in Uzbekistan, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldavia (which had the highest percentage of Jews among its population at 2 percent). The remaining 4 percent were distributed among the other more remote republics. The twelfth largest population group among the principal nationalities, 96 percent of Jews lived in urban areas, which made them more visible to the general population. Nevertheless, they were in the minority everywhere (Korey 1973:25–26).

4. Stella Chertkova participated in this study. Her nonpublished comments appear here under a pseudonym.

5. According to Simon (1997:51), in 1937 there were forty-seven Jews in the Supreme Soviet with that number reduced to six by 1974.

6. By the late 1980s this third group had changed radically as the Soviet Union began to undergo the cataclysm that would transform it into a cluster of bickering republics. Jews who had never thought of leaving began to realize that the promise of a positive Soviet future had been broken and that their personal lives would be affected by the enormous changes that they could see on the horizon. Many were receiving letters from abroad, telling of satisfactory lives, even though there were obstacles to recreating what the émigrés remembered as the benefits of their former lives. In large numbers they began to apply for emigration documents.

7. By the early 1990s, members of the fourth group—intermarried Jews, non-Jewish relatives by marriage, members of the Communist Party who had enjoyed its concomitant benefits, and those of other nationalities who had somehow acquired documents stating they were Jewish—also began to assess the political situation, sell their belongings, pack their bags, and leave.

8. In his autobiography *Fear No Evil* (1988), Anatoly Sharansky (who changed his name to Natan after his release and resettlement in Israel) focuses on both his own awakening religious identity and on his epic battle with the KGB and other Soviet authorities.

9. Andrei Sakharov, a non-Jewish Russian nuclear physicist, championed the rights of various groups (including the Jews) to self-expression and self-determination. Most well-known internationally of all the activists, Sakharov's 1968 essay "Thoughts about Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom" led to his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975. In 1980 he was exiled to Gorky until his 1986 release by Mikhail Gorbachev (Buwalda 1997:51).

He returned to Moscow where he lived, still speaking out for human rights, until his death in 1989.

10. Two writers who had published criticisms of the Soviet regime abroad, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, were arrested and tried in 1966. Their trial signaled the end of the brief period under Khrushchev when writers were granted a modicum of freedom of expression (Gitleman 1988:269).

11. Lyric poet Joseph Brodsky, whose work was circulated informally in *samizdat* form, was arrested in 1964–65 as a social parasite and sentenced to five years at hard labor. After slightly less than two years, he was released and exiled from the Soviet Union. He settled in the United States, where he published widely and taught at several prestigious universities including Columbia University, the University of Michigan, and Mount Holyoke College. In 1987 Brodsky received the Nobel Prize for Literature (Miller 1988:600). He died in 1996.

12. I believe that Dina is a little hard on her extended family, given her own example of being refused and without an income for five years. Nevertheless, between 1991 and 1995, student after student—including some of Dina's relatives—in the program where I taught English to Soviet Jewish refugees has said that his or her most critical mistake was not emigrating earlier. Despite the additional ten to fifteen years invested in their careers, these later refugees have now lost everything they had gained during that period. In addition, even though they are considerably older than they were when they made the decision not to risk everything on the dubious venture of emigration, they are still faced with learning a new language, making adjustments to the culture, contending with a fluctuating economy, and worrying about the fact that they will never become themselves again.

13. Based on his own examination of marriage office registries in one of the fifteen districts of Moscow during this period, Smolar (1971:80–81) estimates that two-thirds of the marriages are mixed, with the percentage decreasing in more remote regions of the Soviet Union. He also assumes that many Jewish parents encourage their children to select their other parent's non-Jewish nationality because of the perceived social and economic advantages.

14. This is not to say that later, when exit visas for Jews became easier to obtain, some did not reassert their Jewish identity to obtain them, illustrating yet again that ethnicity has its "uses." In his discussion of this manipulation of identification labels, Byrm (1994:21) quotes a cynical "joke" that defines "a Jewish wife as a means of transportation."

Chapter Six. Jewish Identity

1. Since women were not required to practice religion in the way that men were, their observances, including praying in Yiddish, were different.

2. Wiesel (1966) and Eliav (1969) have documented their experiences as foreign visitors at this site and have recorded their reactions to the Jewish crowds

that gathered briefly in solidarity yet were unable to carry this group activism into their daily lives.

3. The Shulman family has made an interesting adjustment to American Jewish life in that both Nick and his father have come to Judaism though their love of music. "My father is doing part-time cantorial work more than conducting. In New York we lived right next to a large congregation, and there was a very famous and good cantor. My father was singing in the choir for this synagogue, and then he got interested by listening and learning, but he started singing also in Soviet Union. His grandfather was a *melamed.* [a traditional European-style Hebrew teacher]. His father was also a very religious person. I got involved with *klezmer* [loosely, Jewish jazz, based on European Jewish music combined with American jazz]. I was working at the Jewish Community Center playing piano for senior citizens and one of women said, 'We'd like to have this kind of music. Please listen.' She gave me a tape of *klezmer* music. I liked it very much. Myself and another guy from Soviet Union we put together a *klezmer* group. We do Bar Mitzvahs, we do weddings, concerts in different synagogues, and we did a concert outside in the park."

4. Isaac Babel (1894–1940?) is considered to be the greatest Jewish writer of the Revolution. His stories document his desire to leave behind his Jewish past and to merge into the new Soviet Union. He found, however, that he could never identify completely with the Soviets and that he was, indeed, a product of his people. A victim of Stalin's Great Purge, he was arrested and disappeared in 1940, accused of being part of a "literary conspiracy," and was probably shot (Johnson 1987:454–55).

5. See Korey (1973:283–85) for an example of the dangers of having forbidden books or *samizdats.*

6. Although Mark's personal experience in Moscow is in direct opposition to Stella Chertkova's view of the phenomenon of young people going to the synagogue in her city of Leningrad, her interpretation is probably closer to the mainstream of Soviet Jewish behavior and belief. "There was only one synagogue for the entire Leningrad, and only old, usually poorly educated Jews used to go there. People were not religious in Russia. Lately, after the Six Day War and growth of emigration some Jews, especially the young, started going to the synagogue for the sake of self-expression—as a gesture of defiance. In reality, they are not religious" (Chertkova 1985:19).

7. Others believe that the opposite was true and that it was easier for those living in the large Russian cities to express themselves as Jews because international attention protected them somewhat from retaliation.

8. Even for this group, however, change was inevitable, and by the 1990s when the political situation had deteriorated, threatening chaos and pogroms, increasing numbers became eager to trade their newly valuable nationality labels for exit visas. For once it paid to be Jewish, an ascription that would also entitle them to assistance in Israel or the United States. Based on nearly four years of

interacting almost daily with members of this group, I believe that they form the majority of those who have come since the middle 1990s and that this will continue to be the major trend. Where they will fit into the variegated American mosaic is still unclear, but it is obvious to observers that this adult generation will never become "American Jews," just as they did not identify with either aspect of Jewishness—religion or ethnicity—in the Soviet Union.

Chapter Seven. Ethnicity

1. Even though they lived there during the Communist period, Vadim and Larisa Kirtsov never refer to Leningrad as anything but St. Petersburg because they do not want to give legitimacy to the regime.

2. Smolar (1971:14–19) summarizes Leningrad's Jewish history and describes the synagogue and its functions as limited by the Soviets.

3. Mendel Mocher Sforim (literally "Mendel, seller of books") was the pseudonym of Shalom Jacob Abramowitsch (c.1836–1917), a popular Yiddish and Hebrew writer in the Pale. Influenced by the European Enlightenment, he wrote nonfiction in Hebrew and translated parts of the Bible into Yiddish. He was most popular, however, for his fiction and dramas which had a strong influence on Yiddish literature as a whole.

4. In Simon's (1997:61–62) report on Soviet Jews who immigrated to fourteen major U.S. cities between 1972 and 1980, she lists the occupations during the last "normal period" of their employment in the U.S.S.R. For men, 44 percent were in industry, 14 percent in construction, 7 percent in transportation, 7 percent in medicine, and 7 percent in housing and communal services. Among women 29 percent were in industry, 21 percent in education and culture, 14 percent in medicine, and 10 percent in trade and commerce.

5. Among the difficult alternatives that had faced Jewish students during those years were: attending their first-choice institutions of higher education—if they were lucky enough to be admitted—but facing discrimination in class and later in job placement, working days and attending evening classes because they had been rejected by more prestigious daytime programs even though their grades had been high enough for acceptance; choosing alternative careers because they were not admitted to their first choices; or moving to other republics with less stringent quotas. This latter choice was always accompanied by the fear that they might not be able to return home after graduation.

6. Goldberg (1961:276) discusses this concept of manipulation to right a perceived wrong and how it was twisted and portrayed in anti-Semitic literature.

7. High among the prestigious careers Rothchild (1985:240) lists is ballet, so that Michael might, indeed, have had a glorious future had he not been marked by his Jewish identity.

8. Although younger people might see the 1970s as becoming more threatening and limiting in comparison to the decade before the Six Day War,

Esther Smolor, who had worked since the early 1950s as an architect and construction engineer, remembered the repression of the Stalin regime. She saw even the restricted freedom of the 1970s in sharp contrast to its complete absence twenty years before. Esther continued to express her personal freedom in terms of changing jobs: "I changed almost every three or four years! When Stalin was alive, nobody could change their job, of course. With their agreement you could find a job, but you couldn't leave it; only THEY had to let you go. You were like a slave. You could work all your life; nobody would let you go even if you wanted to. So everybody felt terrible [because] you had to stay. Then when Stalin died, everybody could be in the job he wanted. Everybody was so happy! Even if I liked my job, I left because of the feeling of freedom."

Chapter Eight. The Exodus

1. It did, however, alter the destinations for many and inaugurated a shift away from immigration to Israel (Brym 1994:71).

2. In turn, by the late 1980s, Masha herself participated in this chain migration, writing letters and telephoning, pressuring her parents and sister to come to Hartford. Finally, in 1989, she visited them, setting in motion their emigration process. They arrived in the U.S. in 1990.

3. From his perspective as Dutch Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. between 1986 and 1990, Buwalda (1997) gives a detailed account of this process. His sources include both Dutch and Israeli government documents as well as interviews with ambassadors, other American and Israeli leaders, refuseniks, and ordinary Soviet Jews.

4. In 1968 and 1969, only 3,264 emigrated from the Soviet Union compared to the more than 200,000 in the following decade (Dominitz 1997:118).

5. For fourteen years, every time Michael's grandmother applied to visit her family in the U.S., the Soviet authorities would show her the document she had signed and remind her that she agreed to never see them again. Finally, they relented and she was allowed to visit in 1988.

6. Ida Nudel, a dissident in Moscow, was well known for her work among refuseniks. Refused a visa to go to her sister in Israel, she was arrested and exiled for four years. Although the Dutch Ambassador attempted to intercede on her behalf in 1980, he was summarily rejected. After her release several years later, she was required to live in a small town in Moldavia until she was allowed to emigrate to Israel in 1987 (Buwalda 1997:143–44).

7. Buwalda (1997:89–136), Goldman (1955:338–61), Pinkus (1988: 245–60), and Shifter (1997:87–112) discuss the various sets of international relationships that might have affected emigration and the Soviet attitude toward the Jews.

8. This has since changed, and all applications are now processed through the American Embassy in Moscow. Applicants travel to Moscow for interviews,

then return home to wait for the documents before flying out of any of several cities in the former U.S.S.R.

9. Vida Barron, the former Director of Resettlement for the Jewish Family Service in Hartford commented (in 1993) about the effect of the change that closed the processing center in Italy and brought people directly from the Soviet Union to the U.S. "When our clients went to Italy before they came here, it was a wonderful transition. The climate there was good, and they could unwind somewhat. They could study some English. HIAS was a presence there so they could talk to [staff] people. HIAS was overworked and underpaid, but there was somebody that they could perhaps get some information, real information from. It was a little like a bridge between the two worlds for them. Now, we're taking them from the former Soviet Union in twelve hours, and we see them two or three days after that in the office. Their feet aren't even on the ground. It makes the resettlement process longer, more complicated, especially at the beginning."

Chapter Nine. Selecting New Strategies for the New World

1. In 1990 Barry Kosmin and his associates at the North American Jewish Data Bank conducted 391 telephone interviews with Soviet Jews who had arrived between 1975 and 1983. Even though Hartford was not one of the six large cities or metropolitan areas in this study, I believe that some of the findings have validity here as well. According to Kosmin (1990:30), "The most popular identities chosen by the immigrants were either American Jews or New Americans, with 23 percent in each category. In contrast, 15 percent self-identified as Russian Americans, 14 percent as Russian Jews. . . . The sole identity of Jews (11 percent) outflanked self-identity as either a Soviet Jew (4 percent) or a Russian (2 percent)."

2. From childhood Yelena Akselrod had heard family stories about her grandmother's brother Benjamin Cohen, (who participated in the WPA oral history project in 1938 and worried about the fate of his relatives under Stalin). After immigrating to Hartford in 1923, he had written to the family for many years until they had lost contact. When Yelena mentioned this to Evelyn Alberts, a volunteer in the English tutoring program at Beth David Synagogue, Mrs. Alberts was able to introduce them to his widow who also lived in West Hartford.

3. According to Siegel (1988:54) arrival statistics for Hartford are: 1975—6 families, 20 people; 1976—9, 27; 1977—6, 18; 1978—10, 27; 1979—48, 142; 1980—17, 44; 1981—15, 46; 1981—15, 46; and 1982—8, 20.

4. All staff workers and volunteers who assisted with this study have been identified by name.

5. This is the same group that assisted the Russian Jews during the period of the New Immigration.

6. ORT is the international Jewish service organization that assisted the Jews of the Soviet Union between the world wars by developing training programs and providing equipment and material for new economic projects.

7. By the 1990s this area had become a residential neighborhood for many refugees. Although New Americans since 1989 have also congregated in several other neighborhoods (primarily Loomis Drive in West Hartford Center and the garden apartment complex on the corner of South Quaker Lane and Boulevard), the area surrounding Beth Israel has become the focus of housing for the elderly, for street life—such as it is—and for secular activities (concerts arranged by New American organizers and the Federation-sponsored English programs). Many of those New Americans who belong to a synagogue or attend services go to Beth Israel, which is easily accessible and has reached out to them over the years. Even though most younger families do not remain in this area if they are able to afford larger apartments or to buy houses, the elderly are building a new Russian-speaking community for themselves, in part facilitated by local landlords who accept Section 8 housing subsidies for those with low incomes. This new trend is quite different from the residential and social patterns of their predecessors.

8. Siegel (1988:80) notes that, of the combined group settling in Hartford and New Haven during this period, 48 percent emigrated from the Ukraine, 35 percent from the "Heartland" which included Moscow, 13.3 percent from the Baltics, and 3.3 percent from Asia. The cities represented most frequently were Kiev, Moscow, Leningrad, and Minsk.

9. Eighty-five percent of Siegel's respondents said that language was the most critical initial problem (1988:94).

10. According to Chiswick (1997:233–57), mastery of English before arrival varied substantially among the immigrant cohorts he studied (1960–1969, 1970–1974, 1975–1980 with the latter—the one dealt with in my study—the least fluent) and was an excellent predictor of an individual's ability to command a higher salary, at least initially.

11. Marvin Kay reports that Hartford was asked to sponsor one non-Jewish political refugee family from Chile.

12. Because of her age, poor health, and limited resources, Yelena Akselrod's great- aunt, Rachel Cohen, was able to offer them very little practical help. In fact, the reverse occurred with Yelena assisting her. The only other family connection was Irina Greenberg's uncle who had been one of the small group of post–World War II refugees. He sponsored several families of relatives and assisted one nephew in finding a job, but otherwise he was unable to support them.

13. Although Bette Myerson did not participate in the study, we had talked about her volunteer work during the years when she was active in the NCJW resettlement program. She also arranged for me to interview the Akselrods soon after they arrived for a newspaper article that I was researching at that time.

14. Not only did Evelyn Alberts tell me about her experiences with Soviet Jews, but she also provided my initial introductions to the community. Without her help in identifying my first informants, my research would have been much more difficult. She began helping the Soviet Jews in 1975, the first years of the project, through her participation in ORT. Although she tutored at least thirty people in English as a second language, she became a friend and mentor to many more.

15. When the volunteer effort resumed after a gap of several years during the middle 1980s, the newest refugees were also grateful for the assistance although, as in the past, there were always complaints from people who wanted more or different things. Nonetheless, the supply of volunteers dwindled after 1993, and people are disappointed when they are not assigned a volunteer family.

16. Marvin Kay corroborates this.

17. Because of the enormous positive impact of the volunteers, Vida Barron, the former Director of Resettlement for the Jewish Family Service, was concerned with the decreased level of volunteer participation in the mid-1990s compared to the early period. She says, "Volunteers have fallen off nationwide. Resettlement is not the hotshot item that it was when it was new and exciting to everybody. I think that the economy has impacted on people. They have their own personal concerns, and that takes priority if they're concerned about their jobs or if they've lost their jobs. Another piece of it is that sometimes the arriving family or the sponsor can be demanding or ask for more than is appropriate from a volunteer. There is something of a backlash, a burning out of volunteers."

Chapter Ten. Incorporating New Values

1. In 1994 Mark Sidur believed that this was still a critical issue and that the availability of more scholarships would encourage parents to keep their children in the Jewish day schools. He said, "They are afraid for their children to be with Blacks and Hispanics. They watch TV and see what happens to kids. Also, it is the same condition: everything should be sacrificed for the sake of the children unless they simply can not afford it. If they had a choice, they would keep their kids in the Hebrew Academy. It is the first step on the ladder to Judaism. The parents wouldn't have any choice" but to learn about Judaism through the children.

2. By the mid-1990s the numbers of Russian-speaking students had increased at West Hartford's Hall High School to such a degree that they do not have to integrate in the same way as did their predecessors. They have formed cliques and friendships, chatting in Russian and irritating the teachers. No longer are they a few superb students who have come to America to excel, but they are a diverse group of teens, ranging from honor students to those who are interested only in repairing cars or dropping out. Still, they must adjust to the American school

system where they are not allowed to copy homework, pass answers in class, and give or take answers on exams, all of which American teachers, imbued with the ethic of individual achievement, view as cheating.

Vera Isackson, who taught for thirty-five years in Minsk, says that group activity of this sort is simply self-preservation because teachers are held accountable for the progress of their students. If all the students do not receive fives and fours (equivalents of A's and B's) on the national mastery tests, both the teacher and the principal can lose their jobs. In addition, the collective ethic of the Soviet Union demands that everyone work together for the good of the group. Thus, it is no surprise, as Vera Isackson relates, that she has known teachers to open the sealed packets of state examinations, read the questions, and then give the answers orally to the class during the examination period. Another experienced teacher, known for her professionalism and high ethical standards, says that she never encountered this type of cheating in her thirty years in the classroom.

According to Diane Cohen, who now teaches English as a second language in the middle school that feeds into Hall High, children from the Soviet Union do not always take American teachers seriously in other ways as well. They are accustomed to rigid class discipline, corporal punishment, oral exams in front of the class with sharp reprimands for errors, school uniforms, and national curricula which do not allow for creative interpretation. The smiles of American teachers who are trained to deal positively with children and parents are often misinterpreted as softness and an inability to enforce classroom standards. She tells the story of a home visit to a family of a very difficult student where she and the parents were most cordial as she laid out the problem and discussed—in a positive fashion—the steps necessary to correct it. Only after tea, many exchanged courtesies, and an invitation to return to visit any time did she realize that the family had not understood the seriousness of the problem. Now, on the advice of an experienced teacher from the Soviet Union, she approaches problems in a way that is alien to her but is clearly understood by parents. She telephones, announces that their child has a big problem, that the child will receive a two or a one (equivalent to a D or F) and that the parents need to do something about it so that he will not fail. This gets results, and the students take her seriously.

3. Although the raw data on Soviet occupations of the New Americans is in each individual file maintained by the Jewish Family Service, it has not been complied or analyzed nor is it available because of confidentiality concerns. In any case, these files do not necessarily contain any information about career changes in Hartford.

4. The New Americans do not perceive SSI as negative "welfare"—as they do aid for unmarried mothers and addicts—but as a continuation of the Soviet pension they had earned through years of hard work. Since they have always received medical care from the state, they also incorporate Medicaid into their cultural expectations and do not see it as a stigma, particularly for the elderly.

5. My contacts among the group arriving since 1990 lead me to believe that Hartford now draws workers from a large variety of occupations, including accountants, "economists," and physicians as well as a many blue- and pink-collar workers.

6. This loss of or reduction in defense contracts escalated in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the Soviet Union disintegrated and disappeared, leaving the entire Connecticut economy suffering from a reallocation of federal funds.

7. In the 1990s this was still a critical issue. Says Vida Barron, former Director of the JFS Resettlement Service, "They talk about the fact that especially in this economy we want them to take any job that is open, that we think is appropriate, whether it is in their fields or not. This is a very hard thing for anybody to adjust to. The only thing they come with is what they consider to be their professions, their careers, but it's better that someone wash dishes than they not work. If they have a high level career and they are asked to do something else—at least initially—it's very hard for some people, not for all. Also in the Soviet Union, there's little upward mobility in a job. If you're given or directed to a job by the government, chances are you're going to be in that job for a very, very long time. So the fact that you can take a job in this country and at the same time be looking for something else is a new idea to many New Americans. We have to do a lot of educating on the job market, the vocational process. That's tough, and it's not helped by the economy. When the economy was good and we could get engineers jobs as engineers, it was much easier for them and for us."

8. Since Siegel (1988:75) and I interviewed different people and he included New Haven, our results are different.

Chapter Eleven. Involvement with Community Life

1. This pattern is quite different in other cities with large Soviet Jewish populations. See Gold (1992:67–101, 1997:261–83), and Markowitz (1993:225–64).

2. An exception to this by the mid-1990s was the development of a Red Army veterans group that has a relatively large, active membership of senior citizens. They work with the Russian-speaking staff at the Jewish Community Center and have joined with the Jewish Historical Society to present an exhibition entitled "The New American Veterans in W.W.II, Dedicated to the Memory of the 50th Anniversary of the Victory." (1996) Not only has this group interacted with the comparable Jewish War Veterans organization in West Hartford, but individuals have attended meetings of this latter group. The Red Army veterans are atypical of the general New American population in that they have banded together to further a common interest and that they are interested in participating with established American Jewish organizations as equals.

3. In 1993 Alys Krichevsky, the Coordinator of the Russian Resettlement Program of the Greater Hartford Jewish Federation, said that she works with a

small group of New Americans who have been active volunteers for many years. She believes that although they are becoming aware of the need for their participation in community organizations, they are still slow to volunteer. Boris Akselrod is one of the few people who has consistently volunteered for Federation boards and other activities. He is also a member of the Jewish Community Center, where he has used the sports facilities since he arrived in 1976. He says, "I help now as much as I can with different organizations, synagogues, the Jewish Community Center, and the Jewish Federation." Although he is an exception, he cannot be categorized as a community leader.

4. Vida Barron, formerly of the Jewish Family Service, acknowledges that lack of leadership has continued into the 1990s but she is unsure of how to involve people who do not wish to participate actively. New Americans, she says, "need to be heard, and they need to hear us. We have put New Americans on our committees, and I think the Jewish Community Center has done that too. There may be one or two on the Federation boards, but you can't put somebody on the synagogue board if they don't belong to the synagogue and show an interest. It's a kind of vicious circle."

5. Gold (1992:18–24) presents a brief overview of the literature explaining the factors that discourage the formation of new large ethnic communities in American cities today.

6. See Gold (1997:272–74) and Simon (1997:148–59) for a discussion of entrepreneurs and their problems in Los Angeles and New York, respectively.

7. The Family-to-Family Program, founded in the late 1980s by the late Judith Wolfson was a remarkable program that matched volunteer families with New Americans. Community organizer Robert Fishman says, "When Gorbachev opened the gates to mass emigration, Judith came to see me in my office. She told me that she had decided to take an early retirement from her executive insurance company job and wanted to transition into a meaningful and rewarding volunteer position. In fact, I vividly remember her telling me that her parents taught her always to give back something to the community and to help people who needed assistance. I realized that Judith was the answer to the greatest need we had in our community—to transition successfully from the era of activism, "Let My People Go," to a local community-wide resettlement effort for the projected 1000+ New Americans expected to arrive in Connecticut from 1990 to 1993. In Judith we had a visionary, a trained strategic planner and expert marketer. She used her skills to supplement the existing JFS resettlement efforts by connecting the New Americans with host and anchor families from all parts of our broad geographic community. She made our community's Family-to-Family Program a model resettlement program for North America."

8. By the late 1990s many Jews from the Soviet Union had begun to reevaluate their political stances and turn to the Democratic Party with its history of support for workers. Joseph Lieberman's nomination for Vice President in 2000 clinched the deal.

Chapter Twelve. Religion and Identity

1. This occurs only on the High Holidays and for special events.

2. Another event which impressed both Dina Alexander and Sonya Silber was the March for Israel, a Federation-sponsored fundraising walk-a-thon on Israeli Independence Day. For many years large groups of people walked through West Hartford and then celebrated at an outdoor festival at a local school. Although this was eventually discontinued, a number of New Americans have indicated that walking through public streets, unmolested, while carrying pro-Israel signs was crucial in the development of their new identities as free American Jews. Dina says: "We were walking through a foreign land just as part of the process, in the open, with signs. Of course, intellectually I understood that there was nothing special about this, but the spirit of it was beautiful, that open acceptance of it, that proclamation you're just doing it, enjoying a right, enjoying!"

3. For further analyses of the transformation of Jewish religious and cultural practices in the U.S., see Joselit (1994) and Sorin (1997:126–46).

4. Since some respondents gave more than one answer to this question, the totals add up to more than 100 percent.

5. Diane Goldschlager Prince reports hearing this comment time and again from the New Americans. She says, "The 'Russians' are Soviet Jews. If they were Russians, they never would have left. They would have had all the privileges of being Russian, but they were Jews so they really hated being referred to as Russians. It was an insult because they experienced anti-Semitism because they were Jews. They couldn't bear to be called Russians, which they wanted desperately to be. Then to come to the United States, where all of a sudden everyone referred to them as Russians, was probably the most complicated matter for them to understand, not one that I could understand or protect them from. This was a prime cultural difference and caused bad feelings." Ritterband (1997:336) also emphasizes this point.

6. Even though Rabbi Poupko presented this paper in 1991, it reflects the thinking of the entire immigration period from 1974 to the present.

7. Markowitz (1993:154–55) discusses the importance of these symbols. "This public display of Jewish identity is an inversion of the way Jews treat their 'nationality' in the Soviet Union. There it was 'something to hide,' and, although a Jew could never escape his or her Jewishness, it was downplayed as much as possible. In America, Soviet Jews voluntarily don pendants made of precious metal, sometimes inlaid with gemstones, that proudly display their Jewishness. Not only does the jewelry tell American Jews that the immigrants are just as Jewish as they, but through the medium of gold and silver, former Soviet Jews tell themselves that their Jewish identity is precious and worthy of display. For males, this form of expurgation is particularly striking, for their Jewish jewelry is worn also as a sign of machismo. Emulating Italian male role models, they wear partially unbuttoned shirts that reveal thick gold chains and heavy pendants nestled against

their hairy chests. By wearing Jewish stars in this way, they counteract old Russian and Ukrainian schoolmates' taunts that Jewish boys and men are weak, cowardly, and lack virility and show instead that Jews are as tough and masculine as anyone else."

8. Chabad is the Chassidic movement with an active outreach to Jews who are not part of Jewish life. A warm, out-going group in Hartford, they welcome anyone who wants to learn about Judaism and make every effort to help people "return."

9. Hebrew for the head covering traditionally worn by men, *yarmulka* in Yiddish.

10. A *mezuzah* is a small case nailed to the door posts of Jewish homes. It contains verses from Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:13–21. The word *SHADDAI* (Almighty) in Hebrew or the Hebrew letter for S is written or carved on the outside of the case.

11. This was a major international campaign in the early 1990s to raise funds for the resettlement of Soviet Jews in Israel and the United States.

12. Polina Zilberman says, "When my mother died, our grandmother took us to a synagogue for *Yizkor* [a memorial service held on three specific holidays. Here she is referring specifically referring to Yom Kippur, because it is the only one in the Soviet Jewish collective memory] for the first year. When we were very, very little—six years old—and bundled up in all the *schmatahs* [rags]. It was very hard winter, and we couldn't get into the synagogue because the synagogue itself was a small room, so we stayed outside with our grandmother and a lot of other people. I remember this. It is imbedded in my memory, and this *Yizkor* for me was a very special event because all my family are dead."

13. This is one of several Federation-subsidized apartment complexes for the Jewish elderly in Greater Hartford.

14. Richard Alba (1990) discusses the development of a blended European-American group that retains some symbolic aspects of previous national origins yet focuses on the shared immigration experience and general white European history as the basis for their cultural similarities and outlook in America today. (Cf. Waters 1990)

15. This is in contrast to Kosmin, who found that only 8 percent of his respondents in the 1977–1983 cohort had non-Jewish spouses.

16. See Markowitz's discussion of Bar Mitzvahs and weddings in restaurants in Brooklyn (1997:160–62).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahamson, M. 1982. *A Study of the Greater Hartford Jewish Population.* Hartford: Greater Hartford Jewish Federation.

Abramsky, C. 1970. "The Biro-Bidzhan Project, 1927–1959." In Kochan (ed.) *The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917.* 62–75.

Abramson, H. 1976. "On the Sociology of Ethnicity and Social Change: A Model of Rootedness and Rootlessness." *Economic and Social Review* 8:1.43–59.

———. 1977. "Ethnicity and Marginality in Diverse Societies: The Case of the Ottoman Empire." Unpublished manuscript.

———. 1980. "Assimilation and Pluralism." In Thernstrom (ed.) *The Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups.* 150–60.

———. 1980. "Religion." In Thernstrom (ed*) The Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups.* 869–75.

Alba, R. 1990. *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Altschuler, M. 1995. "The Unique Factors of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union." In Ro'i (ed.) *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union.* 171–188.

Anderson, B. 1991 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Appel, B. 1965. *Israel.* New York: Grosset and Dunlap.

Archdeacon, T. J. 1983. *Becoming American: An Ethnic History.* New York: Free Press.

Aron, L. 1991. "The Russians Are Coming." *Policy Review* (fall): 44–49.

Baron, S. 1976. *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets.* New York: Macmillan.

Barth, F. 1967. "On the Study of Social Change." *American Anthropologist* 69:6:661–69.

———. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries.* Boston: Little, Brown.

———. 1993. *Balinese Worlds.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Becker, S. H., and L. Pearson. 1979. "The Jewish Community of Hartford, Connecticut, 1880–1929." *American Jewish Archives* (Nov.): 84–214.

Bee, R. 1974. *Patterns and Processes.* New York: Free Press.

Bell, D. 1975. "Ethnicity and Social Change." In Glazer and Moynihan (eds.) *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience.* 141–74.

Benkin, R., and G. DeSantis. 1982. "Creating Ethnicity: East European Jews and Lithuanian Immigrants in Chicago." *Sociological Focus* 15:3:231–48.

Bennett, J. W. 1969. *Northern Plainsmen: Adaptive Strategy and Agrarian Life.* Chicago: Aldine.

Berger, A. (ed.) 1994. *Judaism in the Modern World.* New York: New York University Press.

Bershtel, S., and A. Graubard. 1992. *Saving Remnants: Feeling Jewish in American.* New York: Free Press.

Birmingham, S. 1967. *"Our Crowd."* New York: Dell.

———. 1984 *"The Rest of Us."* Boston: Little, Brown.

Bodnar, J. 1985. *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Boelhower, W. 1987. *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Borowitz, E. 1994. "The Ideal Jew." In Berger (ed.) *Judaism in the Modern World.* 246–67.

Bronfenbrenner, U. 1970. *Two Worlds of Childhood.* New York: Russel Sage.

Brym, R. 1994. *The Jews of Moscow, Kiev and Minsk: Identity, Assimilation, Emigration.* New York: New York University Press.

Burwell, R., P. Hill, and J. VanWicklin. 1986. "Religion and Refugee Resettlement in the United States: A Research Note." *Review of Religious Research* 27:4:356–66.

Buwalda, P. 1997. *They Did Not Dwell Alone: Jewish Emigration from the Soviet Union, 1967–1990.* Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Cardin, S., R. Chikvashvili, H. Cohen, A. Khait, and K. Zukerman. 1979. *Enhancing the Jewishness of Former Soviet Jews.* 48, General Assembly Papers. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.

Carmeli, A., and J. Fadlon. 1997. "Motivation to Serve in the Israeli Army." In Lewin-Epstein, Ro'i, and Ritterband (eds.) *Russian Jews on Three Continents.* 389–405.

Carmon, M. 1981. "Economic Integration of Immigrants." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 40:2:149–63.

Carp, J. 1988. "The Impact of the Russians on Us." *Sh'ma* 19/361: Nov. 11:3–5.

———. 1989. *Absorbing Jews Jewishly: Professional Responsibilities for Jewishly Absorbing New Immigrants in Their New Communities.* Chicago: Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

Chernin, A. D. 1999. "Making Soviet Jews an Issue: A History." In Friedman and Chernin (eds.) *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews.* 14–69.

Chertkova, S. 1985. "Where Do I Belong?" *Northeast Magazine, Hartford Courant* Feb. 19:14–19, 28–31.

Chiswick, B. 1997. "Soviet Jews in the United States: Language and Labor Market Adjustments Revisited." In Lewin-Epstein, Ro'i, and Ritterband (eds.) *Russian Jews on Three Continents.* 233–60.

Cholawsky, S. 1998. *The Jew in Bielorussia during World War II.* Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Clifford, J. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Clifford, J., and G. Marcus (eds.) 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cohen, S. 1988. *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Colman, J. 1990. "Acculturation: Absorbing Jews Jewishly--Integrating Them into Jewish Life." In Tranin (ed.) *Soviet Jewish Resettlement.* New York: Council of Jewish Federations. 1–9.

Colon, M. 1973. "Jewish Americans." In Pawlowski (ed.) *How the Other Half Lived.* Hartford. 57–65.

Dalin, D., and J. Rosenbaum. 1997. *Making a Life: Building a Community.* New York: Holmes and Meier.

Dashefsky, A., and H. Shapiro. 1974. *Ethnic Identity among American Jews.* Lexington: D. C. Heath.

Dawidowicz, L. 1975. *The War against the Jews: 1933–1945.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

———. 1977 [1960]. *The Jewish Presence.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

———. 1982. *On Equal Terms: Jews in America, 1881–1991.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Derrida, J. 1984. "Deconstruction and the Other." In Kearney (ed.) *Dialogues withContemporary Continental Thinkers.* 107–26.

DeSantis, G., and R. Benkin. 1980. "Ethnicity without Community." *Ethnicity* 7:137–43.

Dominitz, Y. 1997. "Israel's Immigration Policy and the Dropout Phenomenon." In Lewin-Epstein, Ro'i, and Ritterband (eds.) *Russian Jews on Three Continents.* 113–27.

Dubin, D. 1988. "Venture Capital in the Jewish Community." *Sh'ma* 19/361: Nov: 1:7–8.

Dubnow, S. 1946 [1916]. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

Eisenstadt, S. 1954. *The Absorption of Immigrants: A Comparative Study Based Mainly on the Jewish Community in Palestine and the State of Israel.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Eliav, A. 1969. *Between Hammer and Sickle.* New York: New American Library.

Ellenbogen, P., and S. Reinstein. 1984. "Soviet Émigrés in Saint Paul: A Study of Their Absorption." *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 61:2:174–82.

Etinger, I. 1995. "The Doctor's Plot: Stalin's Solution to the Jewish Question." In Ro'i (ed.) *Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union.* 103–24.

Ettinger, S. 1970. "The Jews in Russia at the Outbreak of the Revolution." In Kochan (ed.) *The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917.* 14–28.

Etzioni, A. 1981. "Refugee Resettlement: The Infighting in Washington." *The Public Interest* 65: (fall): 15–29.

Fass, S. 1985. "Through a Glass Darkly: Cause and Effect in Refugee Resettlement Policies." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 5:1:119–37.

Faude, W. H. 1994. *Images of America: Hartford.* Dover: Arcadia.

———. 1995. *Images of America: Hartford, Vol. II.* Dover: Arcadia.

Feiden, D. 1994. "GOP Garnering Record Support of Immigrants: National Trend Seen Reflecting Cold War." *Forward* June 24:1, 12.

Fienstein, S. 1981. "Soviet Jewish Immigrants in Minneapolis and St. Paul: Attitudes and Reactions to Life in American." In Paul and Jacobs (eds.) *Studies of the Third Wave.*

Fishman, D. 1995. "Judaism in the USSR, 1917–1930: The Fate of Religious Education." In Ro'i (ed.) *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union.* 251–62.

Fraser, B. 1988. *The Land of Steady Habits: A Brief History of Connecticut.* Hartford: Connecticut Historical Commission.

Friedman, A. 1988. "Involving Immigrants in Jewish Life Today." *Sh'ma* 19/361: Nov. 11:5–6.

Friedman, M., and A. D. Chernin (eds.). 1999. *A Second Exodus: The American Movementto Free Soviet Jews.* Hanover: Brandeis University Press.

Frisch, M. 1990. *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning or Oral and Public History.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Gans, H. 1956. "American Jewry: Present and Future." *Commentary* (May):422–30.

———. 1979. "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2:1:120.

Gay, R. 1996. *Unfinished People.* New York: Norton.

Gilbert, M. 1985. *The Jews of Hope.* New York: Viking.

———. 1990. *An Illustrated Atlas of Jewish Civilization: 4,000 Years of Jewish History.* New York: Macmillan.

Gilison, J. 1981. "The Resettlement of Soviet Jewish Émigrés: Results of a Survey in Baltimore." In Paul and Jacobs (eds.) *Studies of the Third Wave: Recent Migration of Soviet Jews to the United States.* 29–56.

Gilman, S. 1994. "The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White? or The History of the Nose Job." In Silberstein and Cohn (eds.) *The Other in Jewish Thought and History.* 364–401.

———. 1994. "The Visibility of the Jew in the Diaspora: Body Imagery and Its Cultural Context." In Berger (ed.) *Judaism in the Modern World.* 87–121.

Gitelman, Z. 1981. "Soviet Immigrants and American Absorption Efforts: A Case Study in Detroit." In Paul and Jacobs (eds.) *Studies of the Third Wave: Recent Migration of Soviet Jews to the United States.* 11–28.

———. 1988. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present.* New York: Shocken.

———. (ed.) 1997. *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the U.S.S.R.* Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

———. 1997. "'From a Northern Country': Russian and Soviet Jewish Immigration to America and Israel, a Historical Perspective." In Epstein, Ro'i, and Ritterband (eds.) *Russian Jews on Three Continents.* 21–41.

Glazer, N., and D. P. Moynihan. 1963. *Beyond the Melting Pot.* Cambridge: M.I.T. Press.

———. (eds.) 1975. *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gleason, P. 1980. "American Identification and Americanization." In Thernstrom (ed.) *The Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups.* 31–58.

Goffman, E. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Gold, S. 1992. *Refugee Communities: A Comparative Field Study.* Newbury Park: Sage.

———. 1997. "Community Formation among Jews from the Former Soviet Union in the U.S." In Lewin-Epstein, Ro'i, and Ritterband (eds.) *Russian Jews on Three Continents.* 261–83.

Goldberg, B. 1961. *The Jewish Problem in the Soviet Union.* New York: Crown.

Goldberg, D., and M. Krauz (eds.) 1993. *Jewish Identity.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Goldberg, S. 1980. "Jewish Acculturation and the Soviet Immigrant." *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 57:2:154–63.

———. 1989. *The Last Wave of Jewish Immigration from the U.S.S.R.* New York: Council of Jewish Federations.

Goldman, Marshall. 1999. "Jackson-Vanik: A Dissent." In Friedman and Chernin (eds.) *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews.* 115–23.

Goldman, Minton. 1995. "United States Policy and Soviet Jewish Emigration from Nixon to Bush." In Ro'i (ed.) *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union.* 338–61.

Goldscheider, C., 1986. *The American Jewish Community: Social Science Research and Political Implications.* Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Goldscheider, C., and A. Zukerman. 1984. *The Transformation of the Jews.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goldstein, A. 1934. "How Many Jews Contribute to Jewish Causes?" *Jewish Ledger* Feb. 9.

Gordon, M. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life.* New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1978 *Human Nature, Class, and Ethnicity.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Grant, E., and M. Grant. 1986. *The City of Hartford, 1784–1984.* Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society.

Grayzel, S. 1968. *A History of the Jews: From the Babylonian Exile to the Present.* New York: New American Library.

Haberman, C. 1992. "Ex-Soviet Immigration to Israel Picking up Again." *The New York Times, Sunday International Section* Nov. 22:3.

Halbwachs, M. 1980 [1950]. *The Collective Memory.* New York: Harper and Row.

Hall, S. 1990. "Culture, Identity, and Diaspora." In Rutherford (ed.) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 222–37.

Handlin, O. 1973 [1951]. *The Uprooted.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Harwood, E. 1986. "American Opinion and U.S. Immigration Policy." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487 (September):201–12.

Heilman, S. 1992. *Defenders of the Faith.* New York: Shocken.

Herberg, W. 1983 [1955]. *Protestant, Catholic, and Jew.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hertzberg, A. 1979. *Being Jewish in America: The Modern Experience.* New York: Schocken.

———. 1989. *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of Uneasy Encounters.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

———. 1992. *Jewish Polemics.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Higham, J. 1963 [1955]. *Strangers in the Land.* New York: Atheneum.

———. 1984. *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Himmelfarb, H. 1980. "The Study of American Jewish Identification: How It Is Defined, Measured, Obtained, Sustained, and Lost." *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 19:1:48–60.

Hirch, N. S. "Understanding the Soviet Jewish Child in Your Classroom." Denver: Central Agency for Jewish Education. 18–20.

Hobsbawm, E., and T. Ranger. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holden, C. 1990. "No American Dream for Soviet Émigrés." *Science* 284:1068–70.

Howe, I. 1976. *World of Our Fathers.* New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

———. 1977. "The Limits of Ethnicity." *The New Republic* June 25:17–19.

Howe, I., and K. Libo. 1979. *How We Lived: 1880–1930.* New York: Richart Marek.

Howell, D. 1982. "Refugee Resettlement and Public Policy: A Role for Anthropology." *Anthropological Quarterly* 55:3:119–25.

Hurewitz, I. 1908. *Die Yuddishe* [sic] *Shtimme* [The Jewish Voice]: Hartford.

Isaacs, H. 1975. "Basic Group Identity: Idols of the Tribe." In Glazer and Moynihan (eds.) *Ethnicity.* 29–52.

Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford (JHSGH) Archives: Newspaper clippings with incomplete citations.

———. 1921. "Connecticut's Greatest Day." *Hebrew Record.*

———. 1921. "Dr. Weizmann: First Jew to Receive Freedom of City.*"Hartford Courant* Feb. 9.

———. 1921. "Plan to Welcome Zionist Chiefs." May.

———. 1925. "Palestine Teems with Activity." *Hartford Times.* Sept.

———. 1934. "Half of Quota Subscribed." *News-Times.* Feb. 18.

———. 1934. "Sees Germany in Grave Plight."

———. 1946 "Vineburgh Elected President of Hartford Refugee Service." *Jewish Ledger.* June 7, 1946

———. 1947. "Local Jews Hail Decision on Palestine."

———. 1948. "Joyous Crowds Here Celebrate Birth of Israel." *Hartford Times.* May.

———. 1948. "Rejoicing over Israel." *Hartford Courant.* May 17:1.

———. 1948. "Israel's Top Post to Weitzmann." *Hartford Times.* May 17.

———. 1967. "The History of Congregation Tikvoh Chadoshoah."

Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford (JHSGH). 1996. *The New American Veterans in WWII, Dedicated to the 50th Anniversary of the Victory.*

Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford (JHSGH). 1999. *Witness to War: The Soviet Jewish Experience: 1941–1945.* Oral History Collection.

Johnson, P. 1987. *A History of the Jews.* New York: Harper and Row.

Joselit, J. 1994. *The Wonder of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture: 1880–1950.* New York: Hill and Wang.

Kagedan, A. 1995. "Revival, Reconstruction or Rejection: Soviet Jewry in the Postwar Years, 1944–48." In Ro'i. *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union.* 189–198.

Katz, P. 1982. "Ethnicity Transformed: Acculturation in Language Classes in Israel." *Anthropological Quarterly* 55:2:99–111.

Kearney, R. (ed.). 1984. *Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Kessner, T., and B. Caroli. (eds.). 1981. *Today's Immigrants, Their Stories: A New Look at the Newest Immigrants.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Kochan, L. (ed.). 1970. *The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917.* London: Oxford University Press.

Korey, W. 1973. *The Soviet Cage: Anti-Semitism in Russia.* New York: Viking.

———. 1970 "The Legal Position of Soviet Jewry: A Historical Enquiry." In Kochan (ed.) *The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917.* 76–98.

———. 1999. "Jackson-Vanik: A 'Policy of Principle.'" In Friedman and Chernin (eds.) *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews.* 97–114.

Kosmin, B. 1990. *The Class of 1979: The "Acculturation" of Jewish Immigrants from the Soviet Union.* North American Jewish Data Bank. Occasional Paper No. 5. New York: Council of Jewish Federations and The Graduate School and University Center CUNY.

Kuntz, E. 1973. "The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement." *International Migration Review* 7:2:125–46.

Learsi, R. 1954. *The Jews in America.* Cleveland: World.

Levanon, N. 1999. "Israel's Role in the Campaign." In Friedman and Chernin (eds.) *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews.* 70–83.

Levin, D. 1995. *The Lesser of Two Evils: Eastern European Jewry under Soviet Rule, 1939–1941.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

Levin, N. 1982. *The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917: Paradox of Survival, II.* New York: New York University Press.

Levinger, L. 1954. *A History of the Jews in the United States.* New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Levitch, E., and A. Livin. 1990. "Who Are the Russian Immigrants?" *Israeli Democracy.* (fall):13-14.

Lewin-Epstein, N., Y. Ro'i, and P. Ritterband (eds.). 1997. *Russian Jews on Three Continents.* London: Cass.

Lewis, T., and J. Harmon. 1986. *Connecticut: A Geography.* Boulder: W. W. Norton.

Lovenheim, B. 1991. "The New Brain Trust." *New York Magazine* 24:26–33.

Manners, A. 1972. *Poor Cousins.* New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan.

Marcus, J. (ed.). 1981. *The American Jewish Woman.* New York: Ktav.

Marcus, J. R. 1969. "Light on Early Connecticut Jewry." In *Studies in American Jewish History.* Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press. 54–107.

Margolis, M., and A. Marx. 1981 [1927]. *A History of the Jewish People.* New York: Meridian.

Markowitz, F. 1993. *A Community in Spite of Itself: Soviet Jewish Émigrés in New York.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Markus, R., and D. Schwartz. 1984. "Soviet Jewish Émigrés in Toronto: Ethnic Self-Identity and Issues of Integration." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 16:2:71–87.

McInnis, K. 1986. "Working with Political Refugees: New Challenges to International Social Work." *International Social Work* 29:215-26.

Miller, J. 1988. "Joseph Brodsky." In *Collier's Encyclopedia* 4:600. New York: Macmillan.

Mittleberg D., and M. Waters. 1992. "The Process of Ethnogenesis among Haitian and Israeli Immigrants in the United States." *Ethnic and Racial Studies:* 15:3:412–35.

Moore, S. 1986. "Social Scientists' Views on Immigrants and U.S. Immigration Policy." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487: S.:213–17.

Moore, T. M. 1982. "Refugee Resettlement: Toward a Conceptual Framework." *Social Thought* (spring):2:8–21.

Morris, H. 1968. "Ethnic Groups." In Sills (ed.) *International Encyclopedia of Social Science.* New York: Macmillian; Free Press. 167–72.

Morse, A. 1968. *While Six Million Died.* New York: Random House.

Nedeva, J. 1972. *Trotsky and the Jews.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

Novak, M. 1971. *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in the Seventies.* New York: Macmillan.

Parkins, C. 1984. "Public Policy Issues in Refugee Resettlement." *Social Thought* 10:3:15–20.

Parsons, T. 1975. "Some Theoretical Considerations and the Nature of Trends of Change in Ethnicity." In Glazer and Moynihan (eds.) *Ethnicity* 53–83.

Paul, E., and D. Jacobs (eds.). 1981. *Studies of the Third Wave: Recent Migration of Soviet Jews to the United States.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Pawloski, R. (ed.). 1973. *How the Other Half Lives.* Hartford.

Payne, R. 1964. *The Life and Death of Lenin.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Peele, R. [sic] 1988. untitled oral history in Simons (ed.) *Jewish Times.* 347–55.

Pelto, P. J., and G. H. Pelto. 1975. "Intracultural Diversity: Some Theoretical Issues." *American Anthropologist* 2:1–18.

Perle, R. 1994. "The Scoop on Senator Jackson: He Doomed the Evil Empire." *Forward.* Jan. 6:1, 7.

Peterson, W. 1980. "Concepts of Ethnicity." In Thernstrom (ed.) *The Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups.* 234–42.

Pinkus, B. 1988. *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pipes, R. 1975. "Reflection on the Nationality Problems in the Soviet Union." In Glazer and Moynihan (eds.) *Ethnicity.* 453–65.

Poupko, Y. 1991. *Some Principles of the Jewish Acculturation of Soviet Jewish Refugees.* Unpublished manuscript. Jewish Community Centers of Chicago.

Rapoport, L. 1990.*Stalin's War against the Jews: The Doctors' Plot and the Soviet-Solution.* New York: Free Press.

Remmick, D. 1993. *The Last Days of the Soviet Empire.* New York: Random House.

Reznik, S. 1991. "Jews in the Glastnost Era." *Society* 28 (May/June):73–83.

Ritchie, D. 1995. *Doing Oral History.* New York: Twayne.

Ritterband, P. 1997. "Jewish Identity among Russian Immigrants in the U.S." In Lewin-Epstein, Ro'i, and Ritterband (eds.) *Russian Jews on Three Continents.* 325–43.

Ro'i, Y. 1995. *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union.* London: Cass.

Rosenberg, I.S. 1948. "Shocking Discrimination." *The Jewish Ledger.*

Rosenblatt, R. 1994. "From Russia, with Hope and Fear." *The New York Times Magazine* (Nov. 20):70–78.

Rosten, L. 1989. *The Joys of Yiddish.* New York: McGraw Hill.

Roth, C. (ed.). 1966. *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia.* New York: Doubleday.

———. 1989 [1954]. *A History of the Jews from Earliest Times through the Six Day War.* New York: Schocken.

Roth, D. 1979. *Connecticut: A Bicentennial History.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Rothchild, S. 1985. *A Special Legacy: An Oral History of Soviet Jewish Émigrés in theUnited States.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rothenberg, J. 1970. "Jewish Religion in the Soviet Union." In Kochan (ed.) *The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917.* 159–87.

Rothenberg, L. 1987. "The Time Jews Danced through the Night in Celebration." Hartford: *The Hartford Courant.*

Rubin, L., T. Abrahamson, and J. Makta 1982. *Acculturation of Soviet Jewish Immigrants: Demonstration Grants Project, Phase 2: The Planning Process: Selected Case Studies.* New York: Council of Jewish Federations.

Rubin, R. (ed.). 1968. *The Unredeemed: Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.* Chicago: Quadrangle.

Rutherford, J. (ed.). 1990. *Jewish Identity: Community, Culture, Difference.* London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Sachar, H. 1990 [1958]. *The Course of Jewish History.* Cleveland: World.

———. 1993. *A History of the Jews in America.* New York: Random House.

Sanders, R. 1988. *Shores of Refuge: A Hundred Years of Jewish Immigration.* New York: Henry Holt.

Sapinsky, R. 1916. "The Jewish College Girl." In Marcus *The American Jewish Woman.* 701–708.

Saunders, E. 1985. "Resettlement Experiences of Russian Jewish Immigrants in Vancouver between 1975 and 1982." *International Migration* 23:3:369–79.

Schecter, J. et al. 1988. *Back in the U.S.S.R.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Schectman, J. 1968. "When the State of Israel Was Proclaimed." In Rubin (ed.) *The Unredeemed: Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.* 149–57.

Schifter, R. 1999. "American Diplomacy, 1985–1989." In Friedman and Chernin (eds.) *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews.* 136–57.

Schreir, B. 1994. *Becoming American Women.* Chicago: Chicago Historical Society.

Schwamm, J., K. Greenstone, and H. Hoffman. 1982. "Resettling Newcomers: The Case of Jewish Immigration." *Aret'e* 7:2:25–36.

Schwartz, S. 1951. *The Jews in the Soviet Union.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Seltzer, R., and N. Cohen. (eds.). 1995. *The Americanization of the Jews.* New York: New York University Press.

Sharansky, N. 1988. *Fear No Evil.* New York: Random House.

Sheinin, Y. 1990. "Looking on the Bright Side." *Israeli Democracy* (fall) 15–16.

Shifter, R. 1997. "The Impact of the United States on Soviet Emigration Policy." In Lewin-Epstein, Ro'i, and Ritterband (eds.) *Russian Jews on Three Continents.* 87-112.

Showstack, G. 1990. "Perspectives on the Resettlement of Soviet Jews." *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 67(1) (fall):66–72).

Siegel, E. 1988. *The Use of Mutual Aid by Russian-Jewish Immigrants: An Analysis of an Informal Helping System.* Unpublished Dissertation: Columbia University Graduate School of Social Work.

———. 1993. *New American Acculturation Survey.* Hartford: Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford.

Silberman, C. 1985. *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today.* New York: Summit.

Silberstein, L. 1994. "Others Within and Others Without: Rethinking Jewish Identity and Culture." In Silberstein and Cohen (eds.) *The Others in Jewish Thought and* History. 1–34.

Silberstein, L., and R. Cohen (eds.). 1994. *The Other in Jewish Thought and History.* New York: New York University Press.

Silverman, M. 1970. *Hartford Jews, 1659–1970.* Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society.

Simon, R. 1997. *In the Golden Land: A Century of Russian and Soviet Jewish Immigration in America.* Westport: Praeger.

———. (ed.). 1985. *New Lives: The Adjustment of Soviet Jewish Immigrants in the United States and Israel.* Lexington: D. C. Heath.

Simon, R., and J. Simon. 1985. "Social and Economic Adjustment" *In New Lives: The Adjustment of Soviet Jewish Immigrants in the United States and Israel.* In Simon *New Lives.* 1–45.

Simons, H. 1988. *Jewish Times.* New York: Doubleday Anchor.

Singer, D., and R. Selden (eds.). 1992. *American Jewish Yearbook.* New York: American Jewish Committee. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

Singer, N. 1994. "Rabin's Russian Trip Recalls Meir's." *Forward* April 29:3, 12.

Sklare, M. 1971. *America's Jews.* New York: Random House.

Smith, H. 1976. *The Russians.* New York: Quadrangle/New York Times.

Smith, T. 1978. "Religion and Ethnicity." *The American Historical Review* 83:5:1155–85.

Smolar, B. 1971. *Soviet Jewry Today and Tomorrow.* New York: Macmillan.

Smolin, A. [pseudo]. 1992. "Me and the KGB." *Northeast. The Hartford Courant* November 29:8–11, 20.

Sollors, W. 1986. Beyond Ethnicity: *Consent and Descent in American Culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sorin, G. 1997. *Tradition Transformed: The American Jewish Experience.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Stangler, T., and J. Shaplen. 1991. "Strangers in Their Midst." *Newsweek* April 8:50–52.

Stave, B. and J. Sutherland. 1985. *Talking about Connecticut: Oral History in the Nutmeg State.* Manchester: Connecticut Humanities Council.

Stein, B. 1980. *Refugee Resettlement Programs and Techniques: A Research Report Submitted to the Select Commission Immigration and Refugee Policy.* Michigan State University Resource Center for Refugee Resettlement.

Steinberg, S. 1989 [1981]. *The Ethnic Myth.* Boston: Beacon.

Stoppleman, S. (ed.). 1990. *Straight Talk: Jewish Immigration from the Soviet Union.* Hartford: Greater Hartford Jewish Federation.

Stout, H. 1975. "Ethnicity: The Vital Center of Religion in America." *Ethnicity.* 2:204–24.

Svirsky, G. 1976. *Hostages: The Personal Testimony of a Soviet Jew.* New York: Knopf.

Talbot, S. et al. 1980. *Integrating Soviet Jewish Émigrés: The Continuing Agenda for the American Jewish Community.* New York: Council of Jewish Federations.

Talisman, M. 1988. untitled oral history in Simons (ed.) *Jewish Times.* 355–59.

Thernstrom, S. (ed.). 1980. *The Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tillema, R. G. 1981. “Starting Over in a New Land: Resettling a Refugee Family.” *Public Welfare* 39:1:35–41.

———. 1992. “The New Russian Special Report: The Winter of Discontent.” *Time* Dec. 7:140:23, 32–69.

Tranin, D. (ed.). 1990. *Soviet Jewish Resettlement.* New York: Council of Jewish Federations.

Ulam, A. 1965. *The Bolsheviks.* New York: Collier.

Ungar, S. 1995. *Fresh Blood: The New American Immigrants.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Van Dusen, A. 1961. *Connecticut.* New York: Random House.

Waters, M. 1990. *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identification in America.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Waxman, C. 1990. “Whither American Jewry?” *Society* 28(189):34–41.

Weber, M. 1978 [1968]. *Economy and Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Weinberg, R. 1995. “Jews into Peasants? Solving the Jewish Question in Birobidzhan.” In Ro’i (ed.). *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union.* 87–102.

Weinberg, S. 1988. *The World of Our Mothers: The Lives of Jewish Immigrant Women.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Wertheimer, J. 1993. *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America.* New York: Basic.

Wiesel, E. 1966. *The Jews of Silence.* New York: New American Library.

Windmueller, S. 1999. “The ‘Noshrim’ War.” In Friedman and Chernin (eds.) *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews.* 161–72.

Wirth, L. 1956 [1928]. *The Ghetto.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wyman, D. 1968. *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938–1941.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Zahler, G. 1989. “Jewish Identity and the Soviet Émigré Newcomer.” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service.* 66:2:142–48.

Zaiman, J. 1990. “Recollections of a Political Writer.” *Connecticut Jewish History* 1:11–12.

Zukerman, K. 1979. “Implications and Future Directions.” In Cardin et al. *Enhancing the Jewishness of Former Soviet Jews.* 16–25.

———. 1988. “Absorbing Soviet Jews: Meeting Ourselves.” *Sh’ma* 19/361:Nov.11:1–3.

INDEX

A

Abrams, Sid (pseud.): the Depression, 69; German Jews, 46; the immigrant community, 67–8; move to the suburbs, 73–4; supplemental religious education, 60–1; Red Scare, 65–6; synagogues and *landsleit*, 53; Zionism, 70

Akselrod, Boris (pseud.): analysis of refusal, 142; anti-Semitism, 99, 119, 122; on becoming a businessman, 188–9; on becoming a citizen, 202; chain migration, 201; dangers of applying to leave, 132; differences in work in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., 182; on freedom of choice for students, 174–5, 177; Jewish Family Service and volunteers, 167; on Jewish neighborhoods, 193–4; traveling across Europe, 145–6; as a volunteer, 259

Akselrod, Yelena (pseud.): only link between groups, xix, 153, 254

Alberts, Evelyn: on making family connections, 254; ORT, 256; on volunteering, 167–9. *See also* Volunteers, Jewish Family Service

Alexander, Dina (pseud.): adapting to Hartford, 157, 158; advantages of education for Jews, 118; American politics, 202; analysis of refusal, 141; attitude toward synagogue attendance, 102–3, 209; choosing schools, 175–6; on computer programming, 181; fear of emigration, 96–7; friends, 196; HIAS, 147; Israeli Independence Day Walk-a-thon, 260; Jewish food, 110; Jewish self-education, 107–8; limited political activism, 204–5; petitioning for Sharansky, 94; the Placement Committee, 122–3; raising Jewish children in the U.S.S.R., 104–6; refusal, 139–40; religion in Hartford, 221; Six Day War, 39; socialism as a motivation for leaving, 129; Soviet Jewish claim of ignorance, 94–5; Soviet Jewish view of the Jewish Family Service and volunteers, 157, 166–7. *See also* Jewish Family Service, Volunteers

Alexander II (Tsar): Assassination, 5; Reforms, 12. See also *Narodnaia Volia*

Alexander III (Tsar): discriminatory laws, 245

Alexei Mikhailovic (Tsar): treatment of Jews, 3–4

Anderson, B., 236

Anti-Semitism: anti-Zionism limiting education, 119–20; boundaries, xv–xvi; in the Depression, 69–71; as an isolating force, 20; and education, 11; as force for emigration, 236; in Hartford, 209, 218; in Kiev, 89; in modern Jewish identity, 238, 239; national origins, 8, 24; and the new Soviet Jewish identity, 85; post-World War II, 31–2; in the public schools, 178; removal of as a barrier in Hartford, 153; role of education in combating discrimination, 118–19; temporary reduction in, 24, 77; in the Ukraine, 99–100

Ashkenazi Jews, xvi, 243; early population in Russia, 3–4

B

Babi Yar, 30

Barron, Vida: on first jobs in Hartford, 258; Soviet Jews as volunteers, 259; on the transition to the United States, 254; on volunteer burnout, 256. *See also* Economic Production

Barth, Fredrik, xxii, xxiv

Barzach Family, early arrivals, *152*

Bender, Sophia (pseud.): analysis of refusal, 142; retraining as a doctor, 181–2

Bennett, J. W., xxii, 234–5

Birobidzhan, 22–24, rumors of deportation to, 36

Block, Ida (pseud.): community organizations, 59; education with Annie Fisher, 60; Hartford political life, 50–1; the immigrant neighborhood, 47; losses in World War II, 72; as a volunteer in the 1970s, 164

Boelhower, W., xxiv, xxv, 237

Boundaries, xv–xvi, 3

Bund: in the Communist Party, 20; as secular expression of Jewish culture, 234; founding of, 6. See also *Evektsii*

C

Catherine II, 4

Chabad: in Hartford, 224–5, 245–6; during World War II, 246

Chain migration: and economic clustering, 180; extended families, 201; in the 1980s, 253. *See also* Emigration

Charney, Michael (pseud.): on American education, 172–3; anti-Semitism in economic production, 121; analysis of refusal, 141–2; arrival in Hartford, 156; attitude toward synagogues in U.S.S.R., 103; dangers of applying to leave, 135; "family tradition," 109; informal Jewish education, 105; learning English, 172–3; releases from relatives, 132; on religion, 209; remnants of Yiddish, 101–2; sponsors, 154; on volunteers, 155, 195

Chertkova, Stella: arrival in Hartford, 155; Jewish identification, 111; on the Leningrad synagogue, 251; living conditions and anti-Semitism, 87–8; popular culture, 159

Civil War, 15–16

Clifford, James, xxiv, 237

Cohen, Benjamin (pseud.): family life, 56, 58; education in the Pale, 10–11; educational choice in Hartford, 60–1; reflections on religion, 55; Zionism, 6–7

Cohen, Diane: culture shock and language, 158; education for Soviet Jewish children, 257; teaching survival English, 172; Women's Plea for Soviet Jewry, 80. *See also* English, Education

Cohen, Emma, **57**; informant, xi; interviewer, xix

Cohen, Rachel (pseud.): helped by Soviet Jewish relatives, 153; only link between groups, xix; and Yelena Akselrod, 254, 255

Communist Party: disengaging from, 135–6; Jews in the, 20, 90–1, 96; membership in the, 91, 246

D

Davidoff, Sam (pseud.): the Depression, 68–9; economic production in the Pale, 13; refugees in the Great War, 14

the Depression, 68–9

Democrats: attitude toward, 203, 204; Jews as, 51; shift to Republicans, 75–6; and Socialists, 69. *See also* Lieberman, Joseph

Denikin, General Anton 1, 16. *See also* Pogroms

Derrida, J., xv, 238

Dillingham, Senator William P., Immigration Restriction League, 66

"Diploma Tax": effect on emigration, 133

"Doctors' Plot," 36–7

Donskoy Family with National Council of Jewish Women volunteers, **163**

Dubinskaya, Masha: on American supermarkets, 157; anti-Semitism and the job search, 123; anti-Semitism and limits on education, 119–20; attitude toward religion in the U.S.S.R., 101; chain migration, 130, 253; on changing jobs, 185; friendship, 191; job hopping in Hartford, 185; lack of Jewish affiliation, 227–8; on not attending synagogue, 218; on seeing Israeli soldiers, 145; supplemental religious education, 174

Dutch Embassy, emigration assistance, 131, 253

E

Economic Production: attitude toward business, 188–9; businesses since 1990, 201; "economic trials" against "parasites," 38; differences between Hartford and Y9 larger cities, 189; and English, 61, 62, 64, 171–2, 179, 181, 185–7, 189; engineers in Connecticut, 179–80; finding work in the U.S.S.R., 122–4; first jobs, 1990s, 258; goals of the Jewish Family Service, 179; income in Hartford (1982), 183; and Jewish identity, 26; limitations under May Laws, 5, 12; loss of occupational identification at emigration, 125–6; obstacles to successful job search, 181–2; occupational chain migration, 180; occupational changes under Communism, 26–7; occupational statistics in the 1970s, 252; permits for work outside the Pale, 4; post-Revolution economic turmoil, 15; post-World War II changes in Hartford, 74; retraining for, 186–7; Soviet Jewish yuppies, 184; symbolic meaning of in the U.S.S.R., 124; under Stalin, 253; the unemployed, 189–90. *See also* the Depression, Jewish Family Service

Education: adapting to American schools, 172–7; creating advantages for Jews, 118; as a facet of self-identification, 118; freedom of choice for students, 175–8; Jewish day schools, 172–4, 211, 256; Jewish vs. public schools, 174–5; *Khador(im),* 10–11; no religious education for teens, 171; the Russian language as the key to success, 26; supplemental religious, 175; West Hartford public schools, 256–7; *Yeshivot,* 10, 26, 52–3, 62–3; Yiddish Communist schools, 25–26. *See also* English, Yiddish

Einsatzgruppen, 30

Einstein, Albert, 51

Eliav, A., xiii, 250

Emancipation of serfs, 12

Emigration: attitude of non-relatives toward, 132–40; attitude of relatives toward, 132–4; chain migration, 130; destination changes, 143–6; difficulty of, 127; harassment, 138–40; prime movers for, 127–8; rationale for leaving, 128–9; Soviet restrictions on, 147–8; U.S. refugee assistance, 130. *See also* Dutch Embassy, Refusal, Refuseniks

English: American Jews speak only, xvii; children and, 60, 173–4, 176, 177, 201; classes at Beth Israel, 158, 172; Dina Alexander, 140, 147; early English programs, 171–2; and economic production, 61, 62, 64, 171–2, 179, 181, 185–7, 189; German Jews and, 43; and the Gulag, 33; as an incentive for immigration, 147; intellectuals and, 183; Jewish observance and, 211–12, 218, 221; Russian Jews and learning, 59–60; as a social barrier, 73, 158, 196; TV and learning, 159; tutoring at Beth David, 154, 156, 172. *See also* Alberts, Evelyn; Cohen, Diane; Education

Enlightenment and modernization, 19, 234

Epsthein, Max (pseud.): anti-Semitism and work, 124; anti-Semitism at school, 178; attitude of relatives toward emigration, 134; on freedom of choice for students, 177

Epsthein, Zena (pseud.): anti-Semitism at work, 124; analysis of refusal, 141; difficulty in becoming observant, 223–4; the "diploma tax," 133; English for children, 173; on Jewish neighborhoods, 194; positive Jewish identity, 241; reasons for emigration, 127–8; religion and nationality, 210–11; retraining for American business, 186–7; volunteers, 168

Evektsii, 20. *See also* Bund

Eyot, Ina (pseud.): Americanization and soccer, 177; on Jewish food, 214; Jews on television, 160; raising Jewish children, 106; Stalin's terror, 36

Eyot, Nicolai (pseud.): anti-Semitism and personal identity, 105–6, 107; celebrating the first Jewish holiday, 112–13; dangers of applying to leave, 135–6; on Jewish behaviors, 222–3; on Jewish food, 214; resisting Communist Party membership, 91; synagogue attendance in Moscow, 103; synagogue membership in Hartford, 217–18, 222–3

F

Fein, Genya (pseud.): adapting to English, 176; choosing the United States, 146; first job, 182; friendship, 191; preparing for emigration, 137; working without anti-Semitism, 124–5

Fein, Shmuel (pseud.): on American liberals, 203–4; danger of applying to leave, 137; danger of Jewish political organizations, 95–6; finding a good job, 184–5; first apartment, 157; Jewish identification, 111; personal possessions at departure, 144; the Young Communist League (Komsomol), 90–1

Fisher, Annie, 60, 247

Fishman, Robert, **78;** attitude of American Jews, 165; Family-to-Family and Judith Wolfson, 259; Soviet Jews and economic production, 179; organizing for Soviet Jewry, 79–81; Washington rally for Soviet Jews, 205, 206. *See also* "Save Soviet Jewry"

Friendship networks: decreasing with emigration, 118; friends, 191, 192; importance of, 117; patterns of, 194–9

Frisch, M., xviii

G

Gans, H., xxv, 240, 245

German Jews: **44;** as a model for Jewish life, 45–6; as seen by Russian Jews, 46; community and language development, 43–5; early immigration to the United States, xvii; location of in Hartford, (map) 42; World War II refugees, 71, 73

Gersten, Sonya (pseud.): community service, 58; Hartford political life, 50; on learning English, 61; Revolution of 1905, 7–8

Goffman, E., xxiii, 244

Gold, S. J., xxi

Goldstein, Abraham, Hartford Zionist leader, 71

Gordon, Milton, 228

Gottesman, Herschel (pseud.): economic production in the Pale, 12; from Democrat to Republican, 76; the Great War, soldier of the Tsar, 13–14; pogrom, 16

Gottesman, Molly (pseud.): the Depression, 68; immigration restriction, 65

the Great Patriotic War, 27–31. *See also* World War II

the Great War, 13–15, 64. *See also* World War I

Greenberg, Irina (pseud.): advantages of intermarriage, 117; analysis of refusal, 141; danger of applying to leave, 133–4; evaluation of the possibility of emigration, 128–9; family connections, 255; friends, 193; leaving school, 177; making choices, 161; new possibilities beyond the Soviet Union, 115; personal possessions at departure, 144; on popular culture, 159–60; retraining as a doctor, 186

Greydinger, Boris, Eighth of March Collective Farm, **21.** *See also* Joint Distribution Committee

Gromyko, Andrei, 33

H

Halbwachs, M., 25, 117–18, 235, 236. *See also* Memory

Hall, S., xxv–xxvi, 238

Handler, Morris, informant, xi

Haskalah in Russia, 6. *See also* Enlightenment

HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society): and engineers, 179; in Europe, 145–7; refugee assistance, 65; on the transition in Italy, 254

Hobsbawm, E. 235

Hoffman, Herbert, *xii;* Washington rally for Soviet Jews, 205–6 Hurewitz, Isaac, 53, 247

I

Immigration to the United States: adaptation to, 153; early western European, xvii; refugees, "Cold War," 73; refugees, German Jewish, 71; restriction, 16–17, 65–6, 71; Sephardic Jews, early immigration to the U.S., xvii

Immigrant Neighborhoods, **44, 48, 49;** community development and change, 67–8; developing Soviet Jewish community, 200–1, 255; the end of the immigrant East Side, 67; the move to the suburbs, 74–5; no sense of, 193–4; no Soviet Jewish community leadership, 199

Intermarriage: advantages of, 117; with American Jews, 201; attenuating community ties, 115; children should not, 225; in the 1990s, 230; maintaining Jewish family in Connecticut, 228–9

Isackson, Vera (pseud.): on Soviet education, 257

Israel: Arab-Israeli conflict and emigration, 127; on choosing the United States over, 144–7; founding of, 73–4; Hartford's reaction to the Six Day War, 77; "invitations" and visas, 131; Law of Return, 130; Nasser, Gamal Abdul, 37; travel to, 197, 217, 223. *See also* Dutch Embassy, Six Day War, Stalin

Izikson, Abram: returning home from World War II, 32; as a partisan, 29–30

J

Jackson-Vanik Amendment, 81; effect on Soviet emigration policy, 93. *See also* "Save Soviet Jewry"

Jacobs, Myrna (pseud.): celebrating Israel in 1948, 73; on education, 62; German Jews, 46; German Jewish refugees, 71; Six Day War, 77; Socialists, 69

Jewish Agency: emigration, 38; *noshrim,* 143

Jewish Community Center, 154, 211, 215

Jewish Family Service (JFS): the agency's role, 181; culture gap about employment, 182–3; financial constraints, 154; on first jobs in the 1990s, 258; guidelines, 166; immigration statistics, 243; job search assistance, 180–1; and the National Council of Jewish Women volunteers, 156–7; preparation for economic production, 178–9; as the primary resettlement agency, 151, 169–70; Soviet Jewish attitude toward, 157, 165–6, 166–7; as a support system, 193; volunteers (1990), xiii. *See also* Wiener, Philip

Jewish food in Hartford, 214
Jewish Population statistics: Russia, 4; U.S.S.R., 147–8, 243, 249; U.S.S.R., World War II, 31; United States, xvii–xviii, 17, 46, 254, 255
Joint Distribution Committee (the "Joint"), 20; Eighth of March Collective Farm, *21;* funds for refugees, 71
Joslit, J.: Americanization of Jewish behaviors, 248
Judaism: affiliated attitudes toward, 219; changes in attitude toward, 210; changes in Soviet Jewish identity, 85–6; Communist policy and national origins, 24; contemporary organizing factors in Jewish identity, 118; continued connections to, 230; education for, 173–4; English and religious observance, 212, 218, 221; on Jewish identity, 254; Jewish symbols, 212, 214, 221, 226, 260–1; "family tradition," 40, 109, 110; linked to education in the Pale, 10; new Jewish behaviors, 214–18; pollution of Russian Orthodoxy, 3; post-World War II patterns, 76; the reconstruction of holidays, 109–10; redefining "Jewishness, 230–1, 233; religion as nationality, 210–11; repression by the Communist Party, 99–100; reuniting Soviet Jews with, 211; and social networks, 115; as a source of practical aid, 151; stigma of Jewish label, xxiii; trends in Soviet Jewish life by the 1970s, 111–14; variety in American Jewish identities, 213; wanting to become "American Jews," 213

K

Kagan, Rita (pseud.): on Jewish food, 214; on going to synagogue, 221–2; reconstruction of Jewish holidays in the U.S.S.R., 109–10
Kaplan, Vladimir, interviewer, xx
Katzman, Yevgeny (pseud.): Israel, 33, 35; Six Day War, 33–4, 35
Kay, Marvin: economic production and older adult refugees, 189; as Jewish Family Service resettlement worker, 154; as a resource person, 162; on English, 171–2; Jewish Family Service job development, 180–1; refugees from Chile, 255
Kerensky, Alexander F.: provisional government, 15
Khrushchev, Nikita, 37
Kirtsov, Larisa (pseud.): on friends, 196–7; anti-Semitism in kindergarten, 120
Kirtsov, Vadim (pseud.): Jewish life in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), 115–16; on lack of Jewish affiliation, 228; transition in Italy, 147
Komsomol (the Young Communist League) and Birobidzhan, 22; separating from, 90
Kopplemann, Herman P., 51
Kosmin, Barry: American attitude toward religion, 210; on the differences between Soviet and American Jews, 164–5; problems in obtaining demographic information, 244; on Soviet Jewish identification, 230, 254; reported Jewish behaviors, 215–6;
Kosygin, Alexei, 38–9
Kovnor, Jennie (pseud.): the move to the suburbs, 75; post-war refugees, 32; World War II, the ghetto and hiding, 29
Kramer, Zoya (pseud.): American friends, 198; on being chosen by Hartford, 151; on the Jewish label and occupational choice, 118–19; personal Jewish identification, 113, 233; on popular culture, 160–1; retraining for American business, 187; self-help in the U.S.S.R., 116; on truth in the Soviet media, 95; on volunteer goals, 166; voting Republican, 203; waiting for an "invitation," 131–2
Krant, Lena, World War II evacuation and industry, 30–1
Krichevsky, Alys, on Soviet Jews as volunteers, 258–9

L

Levanon, Nehemia: on choosing Israel, 144; on refuseniks, 92
Lieberman, Joseph: inspiring the shift toward the Democrats, 259; Washington rally for Soviet Jews, 205. *See also* Democrats
Luftmenschen, 13
Lurie, Rosa (pseud.): American television, 160; education in *khadorim,* 11; on becoming observant, 219; evaluating the possibility of emigration, 130; on finding American friends, 196; Jewish organizations in Kiev, 96; new family connections, 197; on political involvement, 204; visiting Israel, 197
Lurie, Simon (pseud.): religion as "family tradition," 24–5; religious observance in Kiev, 102

M

Magda, Matthew, xix
Malofsky, Sharon, 155, *163*
Markowitz, Fran: on becoming "American Jews," 213; Brighton Beach, xxi; on community, 199–200; Jewish symbols, 260–1; Soviet Jews as yuppies, 184
May Laws, 5, 12
Memory: Frisch, M., xix; Halbwachs, M., xix
Metlitskiy, Mila: Birobidzhan, 22–3
Mitkin, Riva: Stalin's purges, 27
Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreements, 27–8. *See also* World War II
Myerson, Bette, 167, 255

N

Narodnaia Volia, 5
National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW): the Donskoy Family with Malofsky, Prince, Ruderman, *163;* and Jewish Family Service, 157; projects of, 247; refugee resettlement, 154. *See also* Myerson, Bette; Prince, Diane Goldschlager; Refugee Resettlement
New Soviet Man, 19–20, 86, 236
Nisinova, Raisa (pseud.): anti-Semitism, 89, 121–2, 123–4; being Jewish is an advantage, 162; on celebrating holidays in Hartford, 214–15; on choosing the United States, 144; dangers of applying to leave, 134–5: display of Jewish symbols, 214; friends, 197; on giving children a Jewish identity, 226; on Grandmother's orthodox religion, 104, 219; synagogue attendance, 211–12
Nudel, Ida, 139, 253

O

Organization Through Training (ORT): in the 1920s, 20; in the 1970s, 154; training programs in the U.S.S.R., 255; tutoring English, 154, 156, 172
OVIR (Department of Visas and Registration), 131, 139
Oxy system, 59

P

Pale of Settlement: end of, 14; establishment of, 4; permits for work outside of, 4; population, 4; poverty in, 13; rabbis against emigration from, 10
Peskin, Vladimir: the Gulag, 33; World War II Marine, 28
Pogroms, xiii; 1881, 5; Denikin, General Anton 1., 16; post-Revolution, 16
Polish Jews: Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreements, 27–8; "repatriation" and emigration, 38; under Catherine II, 4
Polyakov, Boris: surrender in Germany, 28–9
Poupko, Rabbi Yeheil, Soviet Jews as family, 211
Prince, Diane Goldschlager, **163;** apartments and volunteers, 156–7; meeting new arrivals, 154–5; on Soviet Jewish attitude to Judaism, 212–13; Soviet Jews as "Russians," 260; on the volunteer-Soviet Jewish relationship, 169. *See also* Jewish Family Service, National Council of Jewish Women, Refugee Resettlement

R

Red Army Veterans Group, 258
Red Scare, 64–5
Refugee resettlement in the United States: adapting to the Hartford community, 158–62; attitude toward financial assistance and "welfare," 257; attitude of American Jews, 165; available assistance, 147; the Barzach Family, early 1970s arrivals, **152;** coping with daily life, 158–9; family connections to previous immigrants, 162, 255; new immigrant housing, 157; relationship between Hartford Jews and the newcomers, 165; resettlement goals, 153; role of, 169–70; shift in attitude to Jewish label, 162. *See also* English, Jewish Family Service, National Council of Jewish Women
Refuseniks: lack of information about, 95; Leningrad trials, 93; most Jew were not, 92; petitions, 92–3; Soviet Jewish analysis of, 141–2. *See also* Sharansky, Anatoly
Refusal. *See also* Alexander, Dina; Emigration; Refuseniks
Republicans, 51, 203–4, 259. *See also* Democrats
Revolution and Duma of 1905, 7, 15
Revolution of 1917, 15
Ribicoff, Abraham, 75
Ritchie, Donald, xviii
Rozina, Alla (pseud.): on feeling Jewish, 225; post-Stalin changes, 37; religion in the U.S.S.R., 100; Revolution of 1917, 19

Rubin, Arlene (pseud.): anti-Zionism, 7; economic production, 12; preparing for emigration, 16; religion, 9–10; waiting for the Revolution in Hartford, 50
Ruderman, Barbara, 154, **163**
Russian Jews, definition, xvi

S
Sakharov, Andrei, 95, 249
Samizdats, 39–40
Sandal, Maryam, clandestine seder, *34*
"Save Soviet Jewry," 77–82: enlisting Connecticut politicians, 81; Jackson-Vanik Amendment, 81; political organization in Hartford, Robert Fishman, 78–81; Washington rally, 205–6; Women's Plea for Soviet Jewry, 80
Scharf, Vladimir (pseud.): intermarriage and Jewish identity, 228–9
Shapiro, Chaim (pseud.), 63
Sharansky, Anatoly (Natan), 39, 249; as the symbol of the refuseniks, 82; "Prisoner of Zion," 94; synagogues in Moscow, 103
Shulman, Nick (pseud.): being a Democrat, 204; Jewish music, 105, 251; personal possessions at departure, 143–4; preparing for emigration, 137
Sidur, Mark (pseud.): on affiliating as Jews, 218; attitude toward business, 188; attitude of others toward his observance, 229; on becoming religious, 220; on choosing among Jewish identities, 213; choosing the United States, 146; on Jewish education, 171, 256; Jewish food, 110; the Leningrad trials, 93; making choices, 161–2; New Soviet Man, 19–20; religion as motivation for leaving, 129; religion in the U.S.S.R., 100, 111–12
Siegel, Elbert, xxii; engineers in Connecticut, 180; mutual aid networks, 191, 193; new concerns, 158; 1970 population statistics in Hartford, 254, 255
Silber, Leonid (pseud.): danger of applying to leave, 137–8; "Doctors' Plot," 36; end of synagogue life in Chernigov, 102; on friends, 195–6; International Youth Festival, 37–8; Jewish assistance in transit, 146; Jewish life at home, 104; self-employment, 188; on synagogue attendance, 224–5
Silber, Sonya (pseud.): on Jewish behaviors, 224; change, 231; Jewish education for children, 173–4; on friends, 195; the importance of marrying a Jew, 225; Jewish self-education, 108; the negative Jewish label, 100–1;
Singer, Michael (pseud.): working in Hartford, 64; family life, 58; life in the Pale, 4; reflections on anti-Semitism, 70; religion, 9, 53; Zionism, 51
Six Day War, 39: effect on Soviet Jews, 41, 86, 128; end of Israeli-Soviet diplomatic relationship, 131; Hartford's response to, 77; and Soviet Jewish community, 115. *See also* Israel
Skolnik, Ari (pseud.), 122
Smolor, Esther (pseud.): anti-Semitism and education, 120; attitude toward Israel, 85; career choice under anti-Semitism, 35–6; economic production under Stalin, 252–3; education for poor Jews, 26; finding a job, 187; harassment at emigration, 138–9; on the Jewish Family Service and the job search, 183; living conditions in Kiev, 87; releases from work, 132–3; religion under the Communists, 25
Socialists in Hartford, 50–1
Solors, Werner, xxiv
Soviet Jews, definition, xvi–xvii
Stalin, Joseph: Birobidzhan, 22; first Five Year Plan, 26; founding of Israel, 33, 35; Hartford Jews worry about families in U.S.S.R., 70; post-war anti-Semitism, 31–3, 35; purges of the 1930s, 27. *See also* Smolor, Esther
Stetlach, 4. See also *evektsii,* 20–2
Synagogues: attitude toward in U.S.S.R., 225–6; Chabad, 219, 224–5, 246; English classes, 154, 156, 158, 168, 172; Hartford, 53–4, 221–2; first visit to, 209; membership in, 211, 217, 224; on not attending, 218; refugee assistance, 151; suburbs, 74; Tikvoh Chadoshoh, 71, 168; U.S.S.R., 94, 100, 102–4, 116, 251

T
Tonken, Morton: xix, 69; WPA method, 243–4
Trotsky, Leon, 15
Tsurkin, Myron (pseud.): Revolution of 1917, 15; working in Hartford, 63–4

V

Vilensky, Alla (pseud.): analysis of refusal, 142; learning to drive, 159; retraining as a dental hygienist, 186

Vilensky, David (pseud.): analysis of refusal, 142; owning a car, 159; shopping in Chemelnitsky, 88–9

Volunteers: erroneous belief that Soviet Jews were religious, 212–13; Family-to-Family Program, Judith Wolfson, 259; as friends, 168, 195; no Soviet concept of, 166; relationships with Soviet Jews, 168–9; Soviet Jewish view of, 154–7, 166–8; on Soviet Jews as volunteers, 258–9. *See also* Jewish Family Service; National Council of Jewish Women; Prince, Diane Goldschlager

W

Waldman, Isaac (pseud.): education for economic production, 61; Jewish identity, 3; views on religion, 9, 54

Waters, Mary, xxv, 245

Weber, Max, xxiii–xxiv, 235

Weizmann, Chaim, 51, 247

Wiener, Philip: Jewish Family Service resettlement policy, 166; on job hopping, 185; planning for economic production, 178–9. *See also* Jewish Family Service

Wiesel, Elie, xiii, 250

Witness to War, xx, 246

Wolfson, Judith, Family-to-Family Program, 259

World War I (the Great War), 13–15; economic production in Hartford, 64

World War II (the Great Patriotic War), 27–31, 72; Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreements, 27–8

Y

Yiddish: and the Bund, 6; Communist Yiddish schools, 25–6; education in Russia, 10–12; and the Enlightenment, 5; the "flowering of the nationalities," 25; in Hartford, 61–3; language and culture, 27; as a new Jewish behavior, 214; remnants of, 101–2; schools in Birobidzhan, 23

Yiddishkeit: definition of, 243; American style, 61, 68; end of the European immigrant style in Hartford, 71; end of in the U.S.S.R., 27; in the immigrant community, 45; no new, post-World War II, 73; transference of to immigrant children, 76; without the limitations of anti-Semitism, 56

Z

Zaslavsky, Sergei, translator, xx

Zilberman, Polina (pseud.): anti-Semitism and the job search, 123; on choosing the United States, 145; difficulty of emigration, 127; friendship networks, 117; Jewish self-education, 108; Jewish identity, 223; raising Jewish children, 106; remnants of religion, 104; *Yizkor,* 223, 261

Zionism: in Hartford, 51–2, 72–3; as an illegal political movement in the Pale, 6; post-World War II, Zionist emigrants, 38; as racism, 40; working for a Jewish state, 72; World Zionist Organization, founding of, 6

Zukerman, Karl D., resettlement goals, 153

JEWISH STUDIES

Jewish Hearts

A STUDY OF
DYNAMIC ETHNICI
IN THE UNITED ST
AND THE SOVIET

3 1539 0026809

BETTY N. HOFFMAN

This ethnographic study compares and contrasts the changing ethnic identity of those Russian Jews who settled in Hartford, Connecticut between 1881 and 1930 with that of the Soviet Jews who remained in Russia after the Revolution, became Soviet citizens, and emigrated after 1975. Although both groups were labeled "Jews," their internal definitions of what constituted being Jewish and their personal experiences were radically different. Using both archival and contemporary oral histories, Betty N. Hoffman traces the stories of real people whose lives and choices were affected by both their ethnic identity and the larger movements around them as they made new homes in the United States.

"The book provides detailed accounts of various aspects of life in the former U.S.S.R. and the adjustment process in the U. S., especially Hartford. It provides a good background as to how changes in both Russia and America affected the 'old' East European American Jewish community and the ex-Soviet 'New Americans.' "

—Walter P. Zenner, editor of *Persistence and Flexibility: Anthropological Perspectives on the American Jewish Experience*

Betty N. Hoffman is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Central Connecticut State University, Adjunct Instructor of Anthropology and Social Science at Saint Joseph College, and Project Director of *Witness to War: 1941–1945: The Soviet Jewish Experience* at the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford.

A volume in the SUNY series in
Oral and Public History
Michael Frisch, editor

**STATE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW YORK PRESS**

Visit our web site at http://www.sunypress.edu

ISBN 0-7914-4946-7

EAN

9 780791 449462

90000>